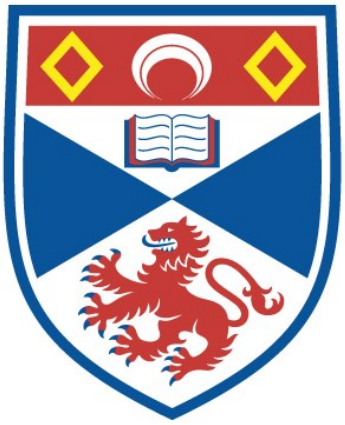
T.S. ELIOT AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Sarah Margaret Janet Jarvis

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews



1992

T.S. ELIOT AND THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

SARAH MARGARET JANET JARVIS

M.Phil. (Mode A)

September 30, 1991

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Th

B117

ABSTRACT

After his conversion to the Church of England in 1927, Eliot's sense of obligation towards the Church and its concerns was paramount in his life and work. His association with Anglicanism has been discussed by such commentators as Helen Gardner, Roger Kojecky and John Margolis, but no recent critic has examined Eliot's comprehensive devotion to the Church. New evidence made public within the last twenty years allows us to see more accurately how the influence of the Church of England predominated after 1927 in Eliot's verse, drama, and criticism. This thesis proceeds to look at Eliot's influential position among the Anglican intelligentsia. The fellowship of this circle heightened Eliot's ideals of communion through cultural exchange and ritual. Eliot's relationship with the Church of England provides a crucial context for the examination of his life and writings after 1927.

I, Sarah Margaret Janet Jarvis, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 60,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date 25/2/92 Signature of Candidate .....

I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance No. 12 in October, 1989 and as a candidate for the degree of M.Phil. (Mode A) in April, 1990; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 1989 and 1991.

Date 25/2/92 Signature of Candidate .....

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of M.Phil. (Mode A) in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

Date 25/2/92 Signature of Supervisor .....

COPYRIGHT DECLARATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful to Mrs. Valerie Eliot for her kind permission to quote from unpublished letters and manuscripts of T.S. Eliot.

Sincere thanks are owed to those who have most generously answered queries or have provided important material that helped to make the research for this thesis as up-to-date as possible: Dr. Roger Kojecky; Mr. George Every; Professor A. Walton Litz; Mr. John Heath-Stubbs; Dr. Donald Gallup; Dr. Elizabeth Revell; Dr. Adrian Hastings; Dr. Byron E. Shafer; Dr. Bernard Benstock; Dr. Elspeth Cameron; Mrs. Anne Ridler; The Right Reverend Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford; Revd. Prebendary Gerard Irvine; Revd. John Hudson; Rabbi Lionel Blue; Miss Vivien Beavis and Mr. Tim Miller of St. Anne's Church, Soho, and Mr. Christopher Dean, Mrs. B. Parkinson, and Mr. Neville Osmond of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society.

I wish to recognise the librarians who have been most helpful with the provision of research material: Miss Susan Rowe, St Andrews University Library; Mr. Christopher Sheppard, Brotherton Library, University of Leeds; Ms. Jacqueline Cox, King's College Library Archives, Cambridge; Mrs. Patricia Gill, West Sussex County Archives; Revd. Dr. Gordon Huelin, Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK); K. Kaplan, Sunrise Associates Ltd; Mrs. Edna A. Hajnal, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library; Mr. Nicholas Mueller, Osborn Collection, Yale University; and Mr. Don C. Skenner, Princeton Library.

For their advice, support and friendship during the course of this thesis, I offer heartfelt thanks to the following: the Faculty and Staff of the Department of English at the University of St. Andrews, particularly to Mr. George Jack for his wise counsel; to friends and colleagues throughout the Post Graduate community of this University; and to sage friends in Britain and Canada, who confirm the joy of fellowship.

Finally, I wish to pay tribute to certain outstanding teachers, to whom I offer my gratitude and admiration. The dedicated scholarship of Sister Corona Sharp, Sister Mary-Louise MacKenzie, and Sister Marie-Anne Quenneville, of Brescia College; and Dr. Anne C. Bolgan, formerly of the University of Western Ontario, helped to prepare the ground for this thesis. I thank Dr. Robert Crawford, who supervised this study with enthusiasm and commitment, and whose own work is an exemplary model.

I dedicate this work to
William Robert and Josephine Megan Jarvis
with love and gratitude, because,

"Home is where one starts from. ...

Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter".

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASG — *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934).

CPP — *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot.* (1969; London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

Idea — *The Idea of a Christian Society and Other Writings* Second Edition (1939; London: Faber and Faber, 1982).

Notes — *Notes Towards the Definition of Culuture and Other Writings* (1939; London: Faber and Faber, 1988).

OPP — *On Poetry and Poets* (1959; London: Faber and Faber, 1986)

Rock — *The Rock: A Pageant Play* (London: Faber and Faber, 1934).

SE — *Selected Essays of T.S. Eliot* Third Enlarged Edition (1951; London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

Use — *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933; London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

INTRODUCTION

> My baptism ... concerns me alone, not the public - not even those nearest to me. I *hate* spectacular "conversions".[1]

T.S. Eliot was received quietly into the Church of England in 1927. This act, as scholars agree, changed the course of his life and work thereafter, but did not necessarily alter his working methods. Although many of his friends, colleagues and critics have wondered why Eliot joined the Anglican faith, few have cared to consider in detail how significantly his reception by the Church affected his work. The implications of such a conversion have certainly attracted much vague speculation, if little detailed critical attention.

Eliot approached this change in the direction of his life as he conducted all of his affairs: methodically and with quiet purpose. His conversion was hardly a "road to Damascus experience" and Eliot had no pretensions to sainthood. The direction of inquiry in this thesis owes its foundation to a discussion among scholars, led by Lyndall Gordon, which contended that Eliot resisted such trite

---

[1] Letter to William Force Stead, between 7 January and 7 February 1927, Yale.

assumptions about his religious behaviour.[2] Now this contention can be substantiated. Eliot wrote that he walked in daily fear because of an overwhelming sense of sin[3] and never was convinced of his own chance of salvation, let alone any suggestion of beatification. He wrote to Paul Elmer More in 1933 telling him: "...I have got about what I deserved, ... and (to put it romantically) the vulture on the liver".[4] This thesis is not intended to resemble either a hagiography or a biography. It attempts to present an objective examination of the complicated developments in Eliot's relationship with the Church of England. Eliot himself assumed as the primary authority in his life and work after 1927 the authority of that Church which he saw as bonded to and deeply rooted in the culture of his adopted country. Without presuming to question the sincerity of his religious belief, we can see that the Church of England not only provided Eliot with a spiritual home, but also allowed him access to a specific kind of English culture to which he was attracted - the culture of English cathedrals, the English social establishment, and the depth of

---

[2] Lyndall Gordon, Inaugural Lecture, Conference marking the Centenary of the Birth of T.S. Eliot, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, 26 September 1988. Dr. Gordon's *Eliot's New Life* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) was launched on this occasion. See also, Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (1977; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 140.

[3] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 2 June 1930, Princeton.

[4] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 18 May 1933, Princeton.

historical tradition associated with the Church of England. Eliot's interest in ritual, tradition, and authority might have led him to the Church of Rome, but the Church of Rome was not the Established Church in England. Only the Church of England could offer him at once the spiritual and the cultural milieu which he sought. Eliot's commitment to the Church of England demands objective investigation, for no single tenet that might have influenced some of the most cogent poetry and criticism in modern English literature should be accepted without question.

This thesis is written in an age of interpretative pluralism: Eliot's work is now being read in a wide variety of contexts. His membership of the Church of England provides only one of many settings in which his work may be viewed. It is, however, clear that Eliot's Anglicanism offers an exceptionally rich and apposite context in which to consider his work after 1927. This thesis attempts to investigate that context for Eliot's work, and considers his 'work' to mean not simply his literary productions, but the wide use which he made of his talents.

Two scholars have implied privately that Eliot was drawn initially to the Church of England in the main by its place in the English life, its traditional practices, and its liturgical and architectural aesthetics, rather than by a sense of

faith or a "calling" to the Christian way of life.[5] This view, which suggests that Eliot's Anglicanism was almost solely a product of his cultural allegiance, is an oversimplification. In the only published fully detailed study of Eliot's Christian activities, Roger Kojecky suggests that Eliot's interest in the Church was a by-product of his literary and social theories and that he was more interested in the mechanics of worship and dogma than in the professed faith.[6] Further evidence suggests, however, that Eliot's involvement in social criticism markedly increased as a result of his tremendous sense of duty towards his adopted Church. It was his faith and its demands which impelled his increasing participation in the practical functioning of his Church. While attempting to form ideas addressing the problems associated with maintaining the influence of the Anglican church in society in general, he struggled to come to terms with his own uncertainty about achieving a state of grace as promised by the Church. As he expressed it:

> Among other things, the Christian scheme seemed the only possible scheme which found a place for values which I must maintain or perish (and belief comes first

---

[5] Roger Kojecký, personal interview, 15 November 1990; and George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

[6] Roger Kojecký, *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971) 219.

> and practice second), the belief, for instance, in holy living and holy dying, in sanctity, chastity, humility, austerity.[7]

It is not the concern of this thesis to judge Eliot's faith. Rather, what follows attempts to trace how Eliot's beliefs affected his attitude towards society and how this in turn affected both his published and unpublished writing. Much of his work after 1927 might never have been composed had it not been for his devotion to the Church which impelled him to labour on its behalf. This was manifested in his conviction that his existing talents should be offered for the Church's use. Moreover Eliot did not disavow many of his pre-conversion ideals; rather, he modified them to suit the nature of his faith. His efforts, for example, to establish cultural links between writers and critics in Britain and Europe evolved into a quest for international communion among Christian and other intellectuals. Similarly, his thirst for new ideas in literary criticism was transferred to new developments in modern theology and social criticism. It is because of this particular interest that Eliot is highly regarded within the Church. His later poetry, drama and prose providentially deal with religious matters, and

---

[7] T.S. Eliot, "Christianity and Communism", *Listener* (16 March 1932): 383. All subsequent references in the text to works by Eliot will be cited by title only.

moreover, he took an active interest in the fundamental organisation and policy of the Church of England.

There remains the question of the effect of Eliot's conversion on his standing among his literary peers, who were often suspicious and uncertain of his integrity in literary matters. Earle Birney, author of the long poem *David*, articulated one of many private and public concerns about Eliot's religious poetry:

> I have a suspicion that later historians of literature will be puzzled by the reverential handling given [to "The Dry Salvages" and "East Coker"]. They're interesting, yes, because one is interested in the drama of Eliot's personality, his struggles to find honest ways to express his thoughts, ... and that puritan conscience he can't expel -- but my God the man isn't any longer a poet, surely![8]

Birney's misguided critical prophecy indicates a widely held assumption among Eliot's contemporaries that his poetic skill had been subverted by his so-called religious sentiment. Even now, there are critics who have not recognised that Eliot's own

---

[8] Earle Birney, letter to James Wreford Watson, 4 March 1942, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto. I am grateful to Dr. Elspeth Cameron for providing this information.

literary and critical standards were all the more stringent because of his beliefs.

In *The Art of T.S. Eliot*, Helen Gardner remarked that, because of the declining influence of the Established Church in modern society, many latter-day readers of Eliot's compositions written after 1927 might not understand the full implications of the liturgical influences which appear in his poetry. Helen Gardner illustrates her point with an analogy of the modern interpretation of *Piers Plowman* which is distanced from the modern reader because of a lack of familiarity with medieval theology.[9] The premise of this thesis is that, just as a great deal of the time and attention is given to studying the relevance of medieval theology to medieval literature, so the same consideration should be given to the tradition of the Church that has influenced the work of Eliot.

Another intention of this thesis is to complement previous studies of Eliot's Christian thought, while introducing important evidence concerning his particular relationship with the Church of England. A great debt is owed to the studies of Helen Gardner, and her former student, Roger Kojecky. Some of the unpublished work of George Every, a friend and former colleague of Eliot, that was furnished towards the completion of this thesis has confirmed many of its conclusions,

---

[9] Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (1949; London: Faber and Faber, 1985) 61-2.

and has provided some new and valuble information. John Margolis, in *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development*[10] lists the many influences of Eliot's literary and philosophic study which have affected his Christian writings until 1939. The biographies of Lyndall Gordon, Peter Ackroyd[11] and Stephen Spender[12] supply useful narratives that refer to Eliot's conversion and his subsequent association with the Church. Russell Kirk's *Eliot and His Age* offers a comprehensive account of Eliot's political, social and literary milieu.[13] Carol H. Smith also discusses the religious element in Eliot's drama.[14] It has been nearly twenty years, however, since most of these studies were first published.[15] Apart from

---

[10] J.D. Margolis, *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-1939* (London, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1972).

[11] Peter Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot* (1984; London: Cardinal, 1988).

[12] Stephen Spender, *Eliot*, (1975; London: Fontana, 1986).

[13] Russell Kirk, *Eliot and his Age* (New York: Random, 1971).

[14] Carol H. Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963).

[15] Previous unpublished works on related topics include: Daniel John Rogers, "Dramatic Use of the Liturgy in the Plays of T.S. Eliot," diss., U of Wisconsin, 1964; John Mack Stanley, "Church and World: A Critical Evaluation of the Corpus Christianum Approach in the Thought of John Baillie, V.A. Demant, and T.S. Eliot," diss., U of Culumbia, 1969, *DAI*, 30.04-A: 1628; J. Bradley Gunter, "T.S. Eliot and Anglicanism: The Man of Letters as Religious and Social Critic," diss., U of Virginia, 1970, *DAI*, 30: 4450A; Brad D. Gooch, "A Homiletic Strain: T.S. Eliot's Use of Lancelot Andrewes," diss., U of Columbia, January 1987, 47.7: 2594A-95A.

occasional critical articles which deal with one or two of Eliot's works, no comprehensive investigation of his Anglicanism has been produced that takes into account many of his unpublished letters and papers. A substantial number of previously unconsidered documents by Eliot and his circle have been brought to light in the course of the present research.

This study is structured according to significant phases of Eliot's association with the Anglican Church, and follows the chronological order of important events in his life and of the publication of relevant works. Consideration is given to the cross-over of various aspects of Eliot's interests and methods, which indicates a well-rounded use of his talents on behalf of his Church. The first chapter discusses the Anglican influence on his poetry, particularly *Ash-Wednesday* and the *Ariel* poems. Eliot's attempt to combine his interests in modern literary criticism with his Anglican beliefs is established in the second chapter, and the public and critical attitude towards Eliot's change of interests is also reviewed and analysed. The third and fourth chapters investigate his move from the modern jazz drama of *Sweeney Agonistes* to the Church-sanctioned religious plays *The Rock* and *Murder in the Cathedral*. The fifth chapter chronicles the change in priority of Eliot's journalism and publishing endeavours and how

they were used eventually on behalf of the Church. The penultimate chapter takes up an important year in Eliot's development, the historical watershed, 1939 - where J.D. Margolis leaves off - and reveals a new aspect of Eliot's social criticism (with its roots in his interest in anthropology). The final chapter analyses his last and most powerful attempts to unite his aesthetic theory and practice with that of his own approach to Anglican theology and worship.

It should be emphasised that a great deal of care has been taken to draw on the unpublished as well as published work of Eliot. His uncollected prose has been given special attention in this thesis, including articles that are not listed in the bibliography of Donald Gallup, unpublished manuscripts and letters, and information generously provided by some who knew Eliot, or who have a particular knowledge of relevant aspects of his work and of the liturgy of the Anglican Church.

CHAPTER I:

THE "TURNING POINT" : ELIOT'S EARLY CHRISTIAN PRACTICES

> At the first turning of the second stair
> I turned and saw below
> The same shape twisted on the banister.
>
> (*CPP* 93).

Eliot's conversion to the Church of England in 1927 was the turning point that marked the culmination of a long and difficult process which lasted from 1916 to 1931. Without pretending to enter Eliot's consciousness, this chapter attempts to trace the outward line of this turning: first in the development of his concerns about tradition, communion and the use of literature; second, the early signs of his critical interest in the Church; and third, its development in the *Ariel* poems and in *Ash-Wednesday*.

"The Same Shape Twisted": the foundations of Eliot's theological and doctrinal concerns

For more than a decade before he joined the Church of England, Eliot's criticism demonstrated a wide knowledge of works concerning social anthropology and the study of primitive religion.[1] Among his early writings, a review of Emile Durkheim's book on religious sociology

---

[1] An important study of Eliot's interest in anthropology and its influence on his work is: Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T.S. Eliot* (1987; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

for the *Saturday Westminster Gazette* in 1916 is particularly significant. In this article, Eliot approved of Durkeim's theory that man's need for association and community is a religious as much as an economic instinct. Eliot elaborated that man needs to be periodically refreshed in "another consciousness that is supra-individual" and that "*communion* not worship is the fundamental sentiment of man".[2] It is possible to trace an influence of Eliot's anthropological speculation in his later thinking. For example, the notion that social communion is an "essential sentiment of man" forms the foundations of Eliot's later conception of Church unity and the individual's need for Christian fellowship.

His early studies in primitive ritual and myth continued to underpin his later Christian poetry.[3] In an address delivered as late as 1943, he suggested that, as runes and chants were introduced to primitive society in rituals of magic to combat man's fear of the unknown, and so today hymns are sung in for similar reasons and to fulfil a particular social need. Verse has aided the memory of historians of antiquity, and its rhythm is the

---

[2] "Durkheim," rev. of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. A Study in Religious Sociology*, by Emile Durkheim, *The Saturday Westminster Gazette* 19 Aug. 1916: 24. Not listed in Gallup, *T.S. Eliot: a Bibliography* (1969).

[3] See, for example, "War-paint and Feathers," rev. of *The Path of the Rainbow: an Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America* ed. George W. Cronyn, *The Athenaeum* 4668 (17 Oct. 1919) 1036; also, "The Beating of a Drum," rev. of *Studies in the Development of the Fool in the Elizabethan Drama* by Olive Mary Busby, *Nation and Athenaeum* XXXIV.1 (6 Oct. 1923) 11-12.

very basis of religious ritual and drama.[4] Definite *uses* of poetry, he taught, give poetry a framework which makes possible "the attainment of perfection in particular kinds".[5] Eliot implied later that by working towards a "particular attainment of perfection", he would be able to combine two major elements: his theoretical preoccupation with the social use of poetry; and his theological concern with man's need of religious ritual. While Eliot had stated in his criticism that the function of poetry should not be overtly moral or political, he began to act as if it was his duty to dedicate his own poetry to the spiritual benefit of society. He essayed techniques of ritual and incantatory style to which the reader might readily respond. *The Waste Land* and some other poems, especially "The Hollow Men", clearly exemplify his knowledge and mastery of ritual. This was more than simply a stylistic device, it was also a way of tapping what Eliot believed to be a fundamental human need to participate in a shared experience of ritual "percussion and rhythm".[6]

The foundation of his theories of the traditional nature of poetry is best expressed in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), three years before the publication of *The Waste Land* and eight years before his entry into the Church of England in 1927. Eliot argued in this early criticism that individual experience is

---

[4] "The Social Function of Poetry" (1943) *OPP* 15-16.

[5] *OPP* 15-16.

[6] *Use* 155.

always matched by a participation in an entity that is supra-individual and communal. In 1916, he described how the individual primitive man participates in the ritual of communion; in 1919, he wrote of the single poem or poet participating crucially in the larger body of literary tradition - "the mind of Europe".[7] From 1927, he assumed that the most important act of communion is that of the individual in relation to his Church. The genesis of three main elements of thought that recur in Eliot's Anglican speculation can be seen in "Tradition and the Individual Talent". The three lines are: emphasis on national and international cultural exchange of ideas; maintenance of cultural tradition as a communal frame of reference from which modern traditions are evolved; and a necessity for the poet to set the shared tradition above individual personality.

The first element, a cross-cultural exchange of ideas, is implicit in the opening section of "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Eliot states the obvious - that "every nation" and "every race" has unique creative and critical tendencies. Usually, a specific culture is more aware, he says, of its own shortcomings than its achievements in these areas. When he sketches the differences between the French and English attitudes towards tradition and criticism, he implies that it might be more instructive for a critic to concentrate on examples of the "creative genius" of another culture than to continually dwell on the short-comings of his own.

---

[7] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *SE* 16.

Throughout the essay, Eliot discusses European, not just English, literature.[8] This concern for "the mind of Europe" developed in his conduct of *The Criterion*, over which he had sole editorial control. When he ended its publication in 1939, he gave as one of the reasons that it was increasingly difficult to maintain ties with Europe.[9] Significantly he later promoted ecumenism in the form of the exchange of ideas and of mutual moral and spiritual support between churches world-wide. Yet he always supported the integrity of the disparity of various cultures - which he would claim, in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, is an essential means of promoting tolerance and understanding.

The second element seen in "Tradition and the Traditional Talent" is, like a cross-cultural exchange of ideas, a trans-historical sense of past and present. In order to share in a particular tradition, Eliot suggested, a poet must be aware of his place in relation to the historical past, without limiting his potential for invention. Similarly, a poet must also avoid isolating himself in the present. He must remain aware of the possibilities, not the limitations, of the repository of existing ideas sanctified for use by the tradition. Eliot demonstrated his awareness of "the historical sense"[10] not only in his poetry, but also in his approach to traditional and innovative Anglican

---

[8] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *SE* 13 ff.

[9] "Last Words," *Criterion* 18.71 (Jan. 1939): 269-275.

[10] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *SE* 14.

policy and doctrine.

The third element, the necessity for the poet to set tradition above individual personality, is presented as "the progress of the artist ...a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality".[11] An artist who strives towards perfection, Eliot elaborated, should resist the indulgent desire to use poetry as a direct vehicle for his personal suffering, experience and emotion. In his later career it becomes apparent that his loyalty to the Church brought about a new and wholly Christian dimension to the notion of artistic self-subjugation and the consequent offering of his talents to the Church. It is now the orthodoxy of the Church, rather than historical tradition, which provides the essential supra-individual communion.

When Eliot joined the Church of England, he would not give up these early theories which continue to underpin his Christian belief. As he said in the 1928 Preface to *The Sacred Wood* (which contains "Tradition and the Individual Talent"), "what had happened in my own mind, in eight years, was not so much a change or reversal of opinions, as an expansion or development of interests".[12] A year before his baptism, Eliot wrote in a letter that he could not see why anyone should repudiate an earlier statement, provided that he was certain that it was a "sincere expression at the time of writing;... one might as well repudiate infancy and

---

[11] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *SE* 17.

[12] Preface to the 1928 Edition, *The Sacred Wood* (1920; New York: Methuen 1986) vii.

childhood."[13]

Meanwhile, Eliot was well aware that the direction of his work was turning. To "refute any ideas of playing possum", he obliged his audience by signposting the direction his profession would take:

> The general point of view may be described as classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic [sic] in religion. ... the first term is completely vague, and easily lends itself to clap-trap; ... the second term is at present without definition, and easily lends itself to what is almost worse than clap-trap, I mean temperate conservatism; the third term does not rest with me to define.[14]

We are aware that labels and catchphrases do not fit the complex nature of T.S. Eliot the poet, critic, and Anglican. The best we can do is follow the evidence he left behind.

Eliot's announcement is virtually a statement of the obvious as there had been signs to indicate that his criticism had begun to take an ecclesiastical turn. He discovered for himself the work of Lancelot Andrewes and revised his view of John Donne. His comment in 1919, that he considered the incantatory style of Buddha's Fire Sermon to be far superior to that of the sermons of Donne, Andrewes or Latimer, reveals that he had been studying homiletics and ritual with keen interest long

---

[13] Letter to William Force Stead, 7 January 1927, Yale.

[14] Preface, *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928; London: Faber and Faber, 1970) 7-8.

before his conversion.[15] Extracts from Andrewes' sermons are borrowed in Eliot's "Gerontion" and in the first lines of "Journey of the Magi."[16] It is evident that his theories on religious style introduced in earlier essays and in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" had developed in "For Lancelot Andrewes". Eliot cited the examples of Andrewes and Donne as writers of "tradition" and "personality", respectively. Andrewes is "more pure", Eliot suggested, because he had allied himself with the Church and tradition, and "his intellect was satisfied by theology and his sensibility by prayer and liturgy". Donne, on the other hand, is "more modern" and "less traditional" and he is "dangerous" to those who hold the "ultimate value" to lie in "personality"[17] - in the romantic Wordsworthian sense of the word refuted in "Tradition and the Individual Talent".

One wonders on the strength of this evidence whether Eliot's own intellect would be "satisfied by theology and his sensibility by prayer and liturgy". These are concerns that are fundamental to the continuing attempt to reconcile his literary work with the doctrine of the Anglican Church. His literary temperament has elements of both Donne and Andrewes, and he has difficulty in reconciling these diverse extremes, both personally and publicly.

---

[15] "The Preacher as Artist," rev. of *Donne's Sermons*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, *The Athenaeum* 4674 (28 Nov. 1919): 1252-3.

[16] J.D. Margolis, *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development: 1922-1939* (London, Chicago: Chigaco UP, 1972) 107.

[17] "Lancelot Andrewes," *SE* 352.

Eliot also speaks of those who hold "in the spiritual hierarchy ... places higher than that of Donne".[18] This sentence makes clear that Eliot thought in terms of a "spiritual hierarchy". In his choice of the catholic Church of England, he selected a denomination that is hierarchical in structure. He continues his discussion of Donne's ambiguous avocation to the priesthood by saying that Donne

> belonged to that class of persons, of which there are always one or two examples in the modern world, who seek refuge in religion from the tumults of a strong emotional temperament which can find no complete satisfaction elsewhere.[19]

Later, Eliot learned that the search for "complete satisfaction" is, in itself, long and tumultuous.

On Clerical Features: Eliot joins the Church

Critical excitement over the publication of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and *The Waste Land* had not quite abated when Eliot's study of tradition - and, by association, ritual - began to attract him to the Church of England. The first public sign of his interest in the Church of England appeared as part of his protest against the demolition of City Churches, mentioned in the notes to *The Waste Land* and in 1926 in *Criterion* commentaries. He remarked to his friend and *Criterion*

---

[18] "Lancelot Andrewes," *SE* 352.

[19] "Lancelot Andrewes," *SE* 352.

contributor, Bonamy Dobrée, that he believed it was necessary to preserve church buildings so that the very structure of the whole Church could remain intact.[20] The demolition crisis still weighed heavily on his mind; as he told Dobrée, he feared the disestablishment of the Church of England if neglect of the churches' fabric led to a similar neglect of the intangible Church presence in society. Eliot prophesied gloomily that disillusioned parishioners would at best join the Roman Catholic church, and at worst, leave the Christian Church altogether to engage in new rituals of civil marriages, and Sunday morning golf and visits to allotments.[21]

Soon Eliot's private concern about the Church obtruded into his public life. In a *Criterion* commentary, he appealed to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, reminding it that a Church can be run in a business-like manner but not as a business. Using St. Magnus Martyr, the church mentioned in *The Waste Land*, as an example, he begs the Shepherds to remember that

> a visible church, whether it assembles five hundred worshippers or only one passing penitent who has saved a few minutes from his lunch hour, is still a church: in this it differs from a theatre, which if it cannot attract large enough audiences to pay, is no

---

[20] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 15 August 1926, Brotherton.

[21] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 21 August 1926, Brotherton; also quoted in Bonamy Dobrée, "T.S. Eliot: A Personal Reminiscence," *T.S. Eliot: The Man and his Work*, ed. Allen Tate (1966; London: Chatto & Windus, 1967) 65-88.

better than a barn.[22]

Having once marked most of Wren's churches in his *Baedeker* Guide to London to be visited as a tourist attraction,[23] he was now a "passing penitent" himself. He crossed the frontier which divided his interest in the aesthetics of architecture and his new-found devotion to the Church, adding, "we shall cease to appeal in the name of Christopher Wren and his school, and appeal in the name of Laud and the *beauty of holiness*".[24] Dobrée confirms that he and Eliot later joined in a very public, very un-Eliot-like act: they headed a protest procession through London, singing socially useful hymns. "The churches were saved."[25]

This is more than an exercise in architectural preservation, because it was the first time Eliot used all his talents on behalf of the Church. He said later that he felt it was the duty of naturalised Britons like him to support the "Church organised by Law".[26] When he became a British subject, or perhaps because he did so, he would practise this policy with vehemence.

Now he began to take interest in the theories and practices of the role of the state in the Established Church. Writing to the editor of the *New Adelphi* in

---

[22] "A Commentary," *Criterion* VI.4 (Oct. 1926) 627-9.

[23] Karl Baedeker, *London and its Environs*, Leipzig, 1908, Eliot's annotated copy, King's.

[24] "A Commentary," *Criterion* VI.4 (Oct. 1926) 627-9. Eliot's emphasis.

[25] Dobrée 70.

[26] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, undated, probably 1929, Brotherton.

1928, Eliot demonstrated his interest in matters of liturgical form. He wrote that while the Church is subject to state law, so the Revised Prayer Book, which was under review in the House of Commons at the time, should be subject to the opinion of Parliament, in spite of the general lack of theological qualifications of most Members.[27]

When he was converted, he became confident about engaging in public and political issues relating to the Church, but was ignorant of certain forms of liturgy and services. His letters to the clergyman who baptised him are full of queries about how one should go about becoming a member of the Church. He asked the Revd. W.F. Stead for his assistance "in getting Confirmation into the Anglican Church"[28] - which is not quite a satisfactory way of putting it, grammatically or doctrinally. He expressed his concern about his Unitarian background ("my people's position in Boston Unitarianism is like that of the Borgias in the Papacy!"), and even worried that he might be examined on the service of Confirmation, not having committed it to memory.[29] After his Baptism and Confirmation, he asked Stead how to address the Bishop of Oxford (who confirmed him) in writing.[30] This contrasts with his later,

---

[27] "Parliament and the New Prayer Book," *New Adelphi* I.4 (June 1926): 345-6.

[28] Letter to William Force Stead, undated, probably 7 January - 7 February 1927, Yale.

[29] Letter to William Force Stead, 7 February 1927, Yale.

[30] Letter to William Force Stead, 29 August 1927, Yale.

lighter note to the *Times* on the issue of the addressing of suffragan bishops as "Lords Bishops".[31]

In the course of regular and devout worship, he eventually became competent in many forms of liturgy from the *Book of Common Prayer* and from the *St. Swithun's Prayer Book*, an Anglo-Catholic book of devotions which was usually presented to Anglican Confirmation candidates. By December of 1927, he was criticising the decay of language in the Preface to the Revised Prayer Book. He maintained that the Church is, like the Law, one of the last bastions of the preservation of traditional language.[32] Later, Eliot's profound knowledge of liturgy came to be used intensively in his poetry.

The first known indication of his public working association with the Church hierarchy came about when he visited the Bishop of Chichester, George Bell, "about a pamphlet I have to write" in 1930.[33] Bell was to be one of Eliot's most influential allies in the Church of England. The unique combination of Bell's respect for the Christian tradition in society and his enthusiasm for modern art of all forms provided Eliot with opportunities for fusing his artistic talents with his faith. Bell was a powerful ecclesiastical patron. The pamphlet Eliot was to write was "Thoughts After Lambeth", and it afforded him an opportunity to exercise his critical skills on

---

[31] Letter, "Lord Bishops," *Times* 11 April 1947: 5.

[32] "A Commentary," *Criterion* VI.6 (Dec. 1927): 481-3.

[33] Letter to William Force Stead, 2 December 1930, Yale.

behalf of the Church. Published in 1931,[34] it was an evaluation of the Bishops' Report of the 1930 Archbishop's Conference. From it emerge two important points about Eliot's growing relationship with the Church. The first is that the author of *The Waste Land* is now publicly recognised as a prominent Anglican who takes the trouble to criticise the hierarchy of his own Church. Eliot's early readers had praised his apparent rejection of affiliation to any particular school or creed. The other point relates to his private life; despite his growing prominence as a member of the Church and the confidence that was invested in him by many members of the Church hierarchy, he experienced a profound inner spiritual crisis, which was reflected in his poetry. In "Thoughts After Lambeth", he made an impassioned plea for resolute spiritual direction from the Bishops and clergy. He admitted to Stead that he looked to his confessors, including Stead, for a firm sense of guidance in methods of spiritual self-discipline:

> I feel I need the most severe, as Underhill [one of Eliot's confessors] would say, the most Latin, kind of discipline, Ignatian or other. It is a question of compensation. I feel that nothing could be too ascetic, too violent for my own needs.[35]

The public version of this sentiment appears in "Thoughts

---

[34] "Thoughts After Lambeth," *SE* 363-8.

[35] Letter to William Force Stead, 10 April 1928, Yale.

After Lambeth", three years later. His argument is that the Church is in need of a more intellectual laity, both young and mature. In order to encourage the participation of intellectuals, the Christian life must not seem to be too facile. Full alliance with the Church requires a discipline of the mind: discipline of "thought, study, mortification, sacrifice".[36] In the same essay, he accuses the Bishops of neglecting their duty in this respect, because they had decided to withdraw their official opinion on controversial issues, suggesting instead that the practising Anglican should rely on his own "Individual Conscience". "Certainly", Eliot remonstrates with Christian humility,

> anyone who is wholly sincere and pure in heart may seek for guidance from the Holy Spirit; but who of us is always wholly sincere, especially where the most imperative of instincts may be strong enough to simulate to perfection the voice of the Holy Spirit?[37]

Lack of guidance from the Bishops is also evident, according to Eliot, in the matter of the censorship of authors of questionable morals and he chastises the Bishops for not taking a firm stand on publication of "controversial" literature. If censorship must occur anywhere, he says, it might be better applied to works issuing from Lambeth Palace.[38] In the end, however, he

---

[36] "Thoughts After Lambeth," *SE* 373.

[37] "Thoughts After Lambeth," *SE* 374.

[38] "Thoughts After Lambeth," *SE* 366.

prefers that Bishops should not concern themselves with such matters because, Eliot thought, most were selected for their skills as administrators and mediators. For this reason, he argued, Bishops were too occupied in smoothing over difficulties to be able to afford definite views of their own, and had no time to read at all widely.[39] Here, Eliot had identified an area in which he might be able to make a contribution as an Anglican intellectual. Throughout his activities as poet, critic and publisher, he always took time to read.

The difficult ascent of the poet and penitent in *Ash-Wednesday* and the *Ariel* poems

The problem of the heart "seeking for guidance" from the Holy Spirit, or the danger of "simulating to perfection the voice" of the Holy Spirit, is discernible in Eliot's own work at the time of his turning. Literary genes of the *Ariel* poems and *Ash-Wednesday* include the rhythm and myth and ritual of *The Waste Land*, the appropriation of liturgy in "The Hollow Men", and the desperation of the aged in "Gerontion". The other essential source which supplies *Ash-Wednesday* is the work of Dante: "my last short poem *Ash-Wednesday* is really a first attempt at a sketchy application of the philosophy of the *Vita Nuova* to modern life".[40]

Eliot's poetry became increasingly subject to the

---

[39] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 10 August 1930, Princeton.

[40] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 2 June 1930, Princeton; Dominic Manganiello, in *T.S. Eliot and Dante* (London: Macmillan, 1989) has studied Eliot's debt to Dante in detail.

influence of Christian thought and the struggle to accommodate his new-found Christian values in his work while maintaining his artistic integrity. What is meant by "artistic integrity" in Eliot's case is outlined in his own words in "Tradition and the Individual Talent". He wrote then that good poetry must surpass the poet's own limitations in expression of thought and emotion. It must also exhibit a mastery of style and maturity; otherwise a poet is in danger of "sentimental clap-trap". Sentimental religious poetry is one of Eliot's pet aversions.

Although Eliot briefly had experimented with the composition of the poetry of romantic love, his rejection of this in his poetry is anticipated in the epigraph of *Sweeney Agonistes*. John of the Cross presumably spoke with the "voice of the Holy Spirit": "Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union until it has divested itself of the love of created beings"(*CPP* 115). Following his conversion, Eliot favoured a poetic projection of Christian asceticism but admitted that he was susceptible to both romantic sensuality and particularly severe religious stringency.[41] In *Ash-Wednesday*, for example, the speaker declares "I renounce the blessed face" (*CPP* 89), and finds physical desires, "stops and steps of the mind", a distraction (*CPP* 93). Even memories of past hope of romance, of sensuality, fade. A similar change happens for the Magus as he leaves his idyllic home, and "silken" girls, to travel

---

[41] Letter to Paul Elmer More, Shrove Tuesday 1928, Princeton.

further towards the cold ascetic reality of the coming Christian faith.

Eliot tended to blur his definition of the romantic, whether in the Wordsworthian or the erotic sense, but in the end he makes it clear that romantic poetry of "personal relations" cannot fulfil completely complex human desires, as he explained in 1930:

> Indeed, in much romantic poetry the sadness is due to the exploitation of the fact that no human relations are adequate to human desires, but also to the disbelief in any further object for human desires than that which, being human, fails to satisfy them. [42]

Romantic poetry and romantic love are unsustained in his poetry: "Because I cannot drink / There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing / again" (*CPP* 89). It is tragic that Eliot dedicated *Ash-Wednesday* to his first wife Vivienne: his conversion had taken place during their troubled marriage. This poem and the *Ariel* poems reject the natural sensuality of human existence and substitute for it an asceticism of religious fervour.

Ash-Wednesday and the *Ariel* poems exhibit extraordinary and powerful expressions of doubt, a sense of exile, and the fear of ageing, death and damnation - this last the ultimate exile. Eliot's inclusion of a discipline more stringent than that required by the Anglican Church suggests his particularly earnest

---

[42] "Baudelaire," *SE* 428.

literary search for ecclesiastical direction. As in "Thoughts After Lambeth" he looks to the Church to affirm its authority by providing strict orthodox guidance to its members. He tries to graft his poetic skill to the tradition of Christian teachings and Anglican ritual and liturgy.

Later, he glossed over the revelatory aspect of his early Christian verse, claiming quite accurately, but not helpfully, that the *Ariel* poems had been commissioned by Faber and Faber as "Christmas cards" - hence the religious theme of "Journey of the Magi" and "A Song for Simeon" especially. When asked in 1962 whether the *Ariel* poems reflected "a search for faith", Eliot replied, "I was already a practising member of the Church of England when I wrote them".[43] This neatly side-stepped the issue, but at the same time he implied that the poems are indeed connected with the Church, and hence the search for faith.[44] He also admitted that these poems in particular were dedicated to the season of the birth of "our Lord of All" - a reason that has more depth than that of a commission from his employers.[45]

The desperate search for salvation drives the poems. The author of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" would have disapproved of the idea that the poems discussed here are autobiographical in nature. Yet they still

---

[43] "T.S. Eliot...An Interview," *Grantite Review* XXIV.3 (Election 1962): 18.

[44] "T.S. Eliot...An Interview," 19.

[45] "German Message," Text of a broadcast in German, announcing the translation of "Journey of the Magi", 23 Dec. 1948, King's.

speak with the painful authority of one whose religion has articulated his worst fear:

> To me, religion has brought at least the perception of something above happiness and therefore more terrifying than ordinary pain and misery; the very dark night and the desert. So to me the phrase "to be damned for the glory of God" is sense and not paradox; I had far rather walk, as I do, in daily terror of eternity, than feel that this was only a children's game in which all the contestants would get equally worthless prizes in the end.[46]

Liturgy in *Ash-Wednesday* and the *Ariel* poems.

Other criticisms of Eliot's use of liturgy have been published, but either they offer a list of sources without explanation, or they tend towards a reductive view suggesting that he simply reworks liturgy as a sort of pastiche. Previous studies have generally failed to take into account the wider context of the poet's criticism and interest in theology.[47]

Eliot was fascinated by the seasonal and rhythmical nature of the Church calendar, the timetable of Catholic ritual, and often dated his letters according to specific

---

[46] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 2 June 1930, Princeton.

[47] For other views of Eliot's use of liturgy, see Karen Romer, T.S. Eliot and the Language of Liturgy," *Renascence* 24.3 (Spring 1972): 119-35; also M.A. Eiles "The Infirm Glory of the Positive Hour: Re-Conversion in *Ash-Wednesday*," *Yeats Eliot Review* 9.3 (Spring 1988): 106-18.

festivals and saints' days. The associations of the *Ariel* poems involve the celebrations of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany (the coming of the Magi), and the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple (to Simeon); all are connected with the Nativity. In contrast, *Ash-Wednesday* deals with its namesake, Ash Wednesday, Lent and the Passion, which observe the suffering and death of Christ.[48] The Incarnation and the Passion of Christ are, with the Resurrection, the basic events of Christian belief. In the *Ariel* poems, he takes the popular prominence of Christmas and examines how the more demanding, even dark aspects of that religious festival affect his own understanding.

The cyclical nature of the Calendar reflects the cyclical nature of life and, in a Christian context, of the state of original sin, redemption and salvation. The Church cycle of liturgy is intended to guide a Christian through the process of redemption from sin; in Eliot's poetry, it is an interminable and laborious process of conversion.

If the *Ariel* poems are about anything at all, they are about the continuing process of the convert to resolve dilemmas of ignorance and doubt. In his biography of Eliot, Peter Ackroyd suggests that the time of the publication of "Journey of the Magi" marked a new beginning in Eliot's work, that "for the first time in

---

[48] See also Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: the Bible in Literature* (1981; New York: Harcourt, 1982) 174.

his poetry we can talk of 'themes'".[49] This is a rather reductive view. Eliot was attempting to use a modern poetic idiom, while attaching himself to an historical tradition as a modest heir of Andrewes, Donne and Latimer. He wished to convey religious experience in work of literary worth.

Like *The Waste Land*, and now in a Christian context, the *Ariel* poems bring to light his obsession with the cycles of death and rebirth. He believed that man's life involved a constant attempt to reconcile opposing forces - the spiritual and the material:

> The human mind is perpetually driven between two desires, between two dreams each of which may be either a vision or a nightmare: the vision and nightmare of the immaterial. ...We desire and fear both sleep and waking; the day brings relief from the night, and the night brings relief from the day; we go to sleep as to death, and we wake as to damnation. We move, outside of the Christian faith, between the terror of the purely irrational and the horror of the purely rational.[50]

This passage is a telling rejection of pre-conversion life. But if it brings its own unspeakable fears, Eliot found that an uncertain heart and a vivid imagination can emphasize out of all proportion the extremities of a

---

[49] Peter Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot* (1984; London: Cardinal, 1988) 164.

[50] "I," *Revelation*, eds. John Baillie and Hugh Martin (London: Faber and Faber, 1937) 1-39.

dread of God. It is a race against time to avoid the death, damnation and exile of the soul. Eliot's Simeon only accepts death of the flesh on the condition that he has reached the full fruition of his revelation of new life of the Spirit: "Let thy servant depart,/ Having seen thy salvation" (*CPP* 106).

The concern of the convert is not completely self-centred. Once he has an idea of the awesome implication of salvation and damnation, he is overcome by the implications of responsibility to his fellow man to share in the one and to warn against the other. This is a difficult enough process which is complicated by having to secure one's own salvation; as Simeon laments, "I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me, / I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me" (*CPP* 106). The prophet, like the ideal poet, is the product of his own tradition and must face the responsiblities which accompany such a heritage. Attempts to evangelize may fail, however, and if so, damnation is a permanent spiritual exile. The journey towards salvation is also a lonely earthly exile.

The spiritual fear of the "dark night" is manifested in the *Ariel* poems. The Anglican prayer, the *Nunc Dimittis* ("Song of Simeon") is chanted during the Evening Prayers, or Evensong, in which the coming of the night takes on the symbolic significance of the coming of earthly death. The journey of the Magi is by night. In "Marina", Pericles's time of waiting has been a dark night of his soul: "Under sleep, where all the waters meet" (*CPP* 109). In "Animula", the soul fears the "drug

of dreams" (*CPP* 101). The night-time of doubt and ignorance is an exile from the daytime of light, sight, and understanding. The third collect of the Evening Prayers exhorts God to "Lighten our darkness, ... and defend us from all the perils and dangers of this night ...".

The notion of dismissal is also a kind of exile. The *Nunc Dimittis* is the Latin title of the Prayer Book "Song of Simeon" and means "now thou sendest". In the Biblical and Prayer Book version of the Song of Simeon, the prophet asks God for dismissal from earthly life, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word" (Luke 2.29). The Biblical Simeon asks for exile from the world because his life has come to its fruition: "and it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ" (Luke 2.26), and there is nothing more to wait for: "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2.30).

Eliot's Simeon, his Magus, and his "simple Soul" ask for the exile of death because they have seen the bleak reality of earthly life and the possible exile of the Soul and cannot bear it any longer. The Magus is "no longer at ease here". Simeon has lived a righteous life, keeping "faith and fast" and realises that there is little hope. He wishes to die "before the time of cords and scourges and lamentation". The simple soul "fears the warm reality" and sees "the spectre in its own gloom". Pericles, Marina's father, is unsure of "Living to live in a world of time beyond me", and even the

hopeful soul in "Christmas Trees" carries with him "the awareness of death, the consciousness of failure". Ariel, the namesake of the series of poems, is a spirit that has been released once it has done its duty. Eliot denied any significance in the naming of the series; nevertheless,the association is there.[51]

Just as Eliot had felt exiled from his family and country, so families, tribes and races are disrupted by exile in his poems. Marina is her father's salvation; circumstances have sent her away and a family is divided. Similarly, Simeon's heirs are exiled from his home ("where shall live my children's children...?"*CPP* 105) and are separated from him even after death. The Magi, now possessing the new wisdom of Grace, are exiled from their own people when they return home and are "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation" (*CPP* 104).

Death is the one exile that cannot be reversed by mortal man alone. When the death of Christ is revealed to the Magus, he cannot understand the ultimate resolution, his own resurrection, which would be a sort of reunion. Paradoxically, the Saviour will surely be exiled almost as soon as he begins His work. Eliot's Simeon understands, and is impatient to see Christ's salvation both before his own death and before the passion of Christ (*CPP* 105). Simeon suspects that Mary will be exiled from her Son and another family will be sundered. Simeon's prophecy is quoted directly from the Bible: "(And a sword shall pierce thy heart, / Thine

---

[51] "T.S. Eliot ... An Interview," 19.

also)" (*CPP* 106; Luke 2.35).

There is a liturgical pun on "satisfaction" in "Journey of the Magi": "... it was," the Magus says coyly, "(you may say) satisfactory" (*CPP* 103).[52] The Articles of Faith in the *Book of Common Prayer* state that:

> The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, ... there is none other satisfaction for sin ... .

Eliot's doubt-ridden Prophet is not as satisfied about the certainty of redemption from sin as are the Anglican Church Fathers. The Magus has only been a witness to Christ's birth, and cannot prophesy, not having been able to witness His death and Resurrection. Likewise, Simeon is faced with a dreadful anti-climax in this fruition of his life's attendance: "Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer, / Not for me the ultimate vision" (*CPP* 105). The simple soul of "Animula" does not even know what to expect after the soul is awakened: "The heavy burden of the growing soul / Perplexes and offends more, day by day" (*CPP* 107). And in "The Cultivation of Christmas Trees", the speaker fears over-confidence in the certainty of his salvation "Which may be tainted with a self-conceit / Displeasing to God ..." (*CPP* 111). The Magus still looks at the problem empirically, weighing

---

[52] The point is made by R.D. Brown, "Revelation in T.S. Eliot's 'Journey of the Magi,'" *Renascence* 24.3 (1972): 136-40.

"evidence and doubt", but he has not yet understood that the knowledge of salvation must be based on faith, not knowledge.

Also from the *Book of Common Prayer* comes Simeon's supplicatory refrain "Grant us thy peace". It is not actually uttered in the *Nunc Dimittis,* but it is used in various other Anglican services, including the Litany and Communion, in the chant *Agnus Dei* - "Lamb of God":

> O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world:
> Have mercy upon us
> O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world:
> Grant us thy peace.

When Eliot's Simeon chants the refrain, it is more of a moan of grief for the coming sacrifice of his people. Ignorant of the circumstances of Christ's death, he assumes that his people will have to bear the burden of sacrifice of land, freedom and heritage - in short, their tradition - for their own redemption. Finally, he is wary even of making supplications on behalf of others ("I am tired with my own life and the lives of those after me" *CPP* 106) and the pronoun changes: "Grant *me* thy peace". Eventually, Simeon cannot bear the burden of the revelation that has confronted him and sees himself as a sacrificial lamb: "I am dying in my own death and the deaths of those after me" (*CPP* 106). The witness and testimony alone is Simeon's idea of his life's fulfillment.

Converts often feel the need to make sacrifices for

their new-found faith as Eliot did. Simeon, however, is emotionally and spiritually exhausted after all his work is done and does not look for a new life. He sinks thankfully to death, hoping that his old life has been fulfilled and the duty has been done. He and the Magus look to death, not to salvation, as an escape from life's labours. In the Requiem Mass in the *St. Swithun's Prayer Book*, the sentences of the *Agnus Dei* appeal to God on behalf of the departed to "... grant them rest ... everlasting". Yet it is not as if Eliot's Simeon and the Magus in particular have erred or have misinterpreted the process of conversion. Theirs are very bleak views of salvation, and are imperfect, being based on natural doubt and ignorance. Neither Simeon nor the Magus has the benefit of revelation. After the Requiem *Agnus Dei* in *St. Swithun's Prayer Book*, comes a prayer for mercy, "even if it were with an imperfect love".

In "Animula", published in 1929, while *Ash-Wednesday* was being written, there is a little progress in the soul's search for new life. It is still uncertain; still treating earthly life as spiritual death. For now, the soul is paralysed and "Unable to fare forward or retreat, / Fearing the warm reality ..." and has a poor self-image: "irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame". This is reminiscent of Eliot's dreadful fear of damnation through sins of the flesh. But the simple soul understands the renewal of life after the fulfillment of salvation: "living first in the silence after the viaticum". The viaticum in the *St. Swithun's Prayer Book* is the Eucharist adminstered to the dying; it is a

symbolic affirmation that, by partaking in the commemoration of the death of Christ, the penitent will also partake in His spiritual resurrection. Thus, spiritually speaking, the dying penitent feels he can only start to live after he has been commended to his salvation.

The vestiges of the earthly life at its end are the "disordered papers in a dusty room" (*CPP* 107), which contrasts with a phrase from the Prayers for the Dying in the *St. Swithun's Prayer Book*: "...let thine habitation to-day be at peace, and thine abode in Holy Sion". Death itself is the final hardship and the final test of earthly life (also from *St. Swithun's*):

> ... and I commit thee [says the priest] to Him Whose creature thou art, that when thou shalt have paid the debt of human nature by passing through death, thou mayest return to thy Maker ....

The Anglo-Catholic liturgy contrasts with Simeon's notion that the hardship of earthly life is enough penance to guarantee salvation. The supplication at the end of "Animula", "Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth" (*CPP* 106), reflects the penitent's fear of the trials of earthly life. The soul lives "fearing the warm reality, the offered good" (*CPP* 107). The conclusion of "Animula" refers to the rebirth of the convert, which means the death of sin and a new life through salvation. It contrasts diametrically with the *St. Swithun's Prayer Book* Anglo-Catholic intercession in the viaticum: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for him, a poor sinner, in this

the hour of his death."

Rather than borrowing phrases of liturgy as happens in the *Ariel* poems, *Ash-Wednesday* is a meditation on a form of liturgy. It is as if, while engaged in prayer during worship, the speaker's mind has taken up snatches of the liturgy it registers and wanders off on its own journey of spiritual exploration.

The very name of *Ash-Wednesday* provides the framework for this meditation of the mind of the poet/penitent because of its association with the stark, dramatic nature of the commemoration of Ash Wednesday. By 1927, when a regular communicant, Eliot would have taken part in this ritual at least twice. The full ritual includes lengthy litanies, recitations of psalms and chants, continuous prayers of penitence and commination, and the celebration of the Eucharist. During the service, the ashes of palms are blessed, and members of the congregation come before the priest who marks the sign of the cross with the ashes on their foreheads. While doing so, the priest intones, "Remember that dust ye were and dust ye shall become. Repent ye, and believe in the Gospel". The handful of dust is a stark reminder of the fragile nature of mortality. It would have appealed to Eliot's sense of drama.

The observance of Ash Wednesday ("the time of tension between dying and birth") is prescribed by the Church to be a time of examination of conscience, and repentance of sins. The Collect, Epistle (Joel 2.12 ff), and Gospel (Matthew 6.16 ff) call upon God to "create new and contrite hearts" in the penitent. Those penitents

shall in turn strive not towards superficial piety - the Biblical phrase, "rend your hearts, not your garments" corresponds with the tearing of the white leopards in *Ash-Wednesday* - but an inward, spiritual change. The desert in *Ash-Wednesday* is a reflection of this metaphor of the soul in Psalm 143.6: "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul gaspeth unto thee as a thirsty land". Psalm 32.12 is a possible source for Eliot's words, "having to construct something / upon which to rejoice"; the words of the Psalm are a command to rejoice: "Be glad O ye righteous, and rejoice in the Lord...". Eliot's penitent is not convinced of his righteousness, for if he were, he would not feel the need to invent a reason for rejoicing.

The last line of the poem, "And let my cry come unto Thee" (*CPP* 99), has also been changed from the original "And let *our* cry". The phrase occurs in the liturgy as the response of the congregation to the Celebrant's "Lord, hear our prayer". The meditating speaker is isolating himself from the congregation, and is resisting a sense of communion. This sense of isolation has some relevance to Eliot's entry into the Church; when he took part in those services he was the sole candidate, whereas it is common in the Church for a group of candidates to share the service of Confirmation at least.

The liturgy of the Anglican Church shares much with that of the Roman Catholic Church and there is indeed good evidence that Eliot had a sound knowledge of Roman Catholic liturgy and its modern criticism. The phrase, "Lord, I am not worthy/ but speak the word only" (*CPP* 93)

relates to the Roman Catholic *"Domine non sum dignus"* which is spoken before the Communion: "Lord, I am not worthy, but only say the word and I shall be forgiven". However, there are specific elements of the Roman Catholic liturgical practices, such as the Litany of Our Lady, which the speaker appears at first to reject. He provides a warning to those Christians who should seek to know the practices of the true Church: "suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood" (*CPP* 98). One of the contributors to the *Criterion* was the Revd. M.C. D'Arcy, SJ, a literary and liturgical critic, and in 1928, a review of his study of the Mass appeared in the *Criterion*.[53] Eliot met D'Arcy in Oxford in 1929 and discussed with him the text of *Ash-Wednesday*.[54]

Eliot also expressed interest in modern uses of Catholic liturgy in the works of others, and was interested in dramatic presentations of Mary's life.[55] The Lady "Going in white and blue, in Mary's colour" provides the focus for prayer and the axis of movement in the poem; who walks "between the violet and the violet"; who "moves among the others as they walked..."; who "moves in the time between sleeping and waking..." (*CPP* 94). Mary is, in a sense, the outward rendition of the

---

[53] Rev. of *The Mass and the Redemption*, by M.C. D'Arcy, *Criterion* VIII.30 (September 1928): 170. *The Mass and the Redemption* is a technical study of the Eucharist.

[54] Stephen Spender, *Eliot* (1975; London: Fontana Press, 1986) 129.

[55] Preface, *The Merrie Masque of Our Lady in London Town* by Charles A. Claye (1928; Oxford: Perpetua Press, 1988). Not in Gallup, *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography*, 1969.

inward drama of prayer throughout the poem. While *Ash-Wednesday* was at first dedicated to Vivienne Eliot, it is Mary who is the main female presence in the poem. The penitent turns to Mary in hope that she will save him from despair. In the first and bleakest section of the poem, he borrows the intercession from the "Hail Mary": "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death" (*CPP* 90). As in the Catholic liturgy, this phrase precedes the 'Litany of Our Lady' of section II.

The penitent's attempts to use Mary as a spiritual support ("because of her loveliness ... / We shine with brightness" *CPP* 91) misfire, however, because of his own doubt and misguided approach to prayer. Eliot would have been familiar with the Rosary as it is printed in the *St. Swithun's Prayer Book*. It was developed in the sixteenth century as an aid to prayer, and consists of a series of short petitions, using the Rosary beads as an aid to memory. By constant repetition of simple prayers, the supplicant could free his mind of other concerns and contemplate the deeper mysteries of the Christian faith; "thus devoted, concentrated in purpose" (*CPP* 91). The Litany of the Blessed Virgin, as it is called in *St. Swithun's Prayer Book*, is often recited with the Rosary. In *Ash-Wednesday*, the penitent's failure to recite the supplications of the Marian litany relects the disorder of his own mind. The corrupted litany that is produced by the speaker does not contain the idealised attributes of Mary as she is described in *St. Swithun's Prayer Book*:

Seat of wisdom,

Cause of our joy,

Vessel meet to be honoured,

Wondrous vessel of devotion,

Mystic Rose

Instead, the deteriorated litany in the poem appears to reveal the attributes of the penitent's own troubled soul:

Calm and distressed

Torn and most Whole

...

Exhausted and life-giving

Worried reposeful

(*CPP* 91).

Even intercessionary supplications are broken down by Eliot's pentitent.

As with the *Ariel* poems, his poetry becomes once again a synthesis of various traditions from his culture. In *Ash-Wednesday,* Biblical allusions and selection of passages from the Old and New Testaments continue the tension of opposites to the past and present in the poem. The nod to Ecclesiastes, for example, "Because I know that time is always time ..." (*CPP* 89), brings back the idea of time past and time present from "Tradition and the Individual Talent". The passage suggests a fulcrum of "now" on which opposites are balanced by their very division.[56]

The significance of the Word in the poem can be traced to the influence of others. In the *Criterion,*

---

[56] The point is made by Orgill McKenzie, rev. of "*Ash-Wednesday,*" *New Adelphi* (June-Aug. 1930) *T.S. Eliot: the Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982) 257.

Yeats expressed his disbelief in the Word, the Incarnation, but he says, "like most men of my kind... I desire belief", and the presence of belief in art "delights" him.[57] To some critics, like Arnold, art was a substitute for religious belief. In *Ash-Wednesday*, the speaker is surrounded by the various tensions of life: poetry without belief; appreciation of belief in other art; the search for belief; the acceptance of belief; and the presence of true belief in one's own art.

The Incarnation, the coming of the Messiah, is announced with hesitancy in Eliot's work; and there is uncertainty that the Word will be heard in the world. An Old Testament prophet in exile and the sort of prophet depicted in Eliot's poems would certainly have had doubts as to the effectiveness of the meek, spiritual Messiah who did come. The speaker of *Ash-Wednesday*, too, wonders whether his vision will be clouded by false preconceptions or whether he will recognize the ineffable potency of the true spiritual Messiah.

The announcement of the Word comes as a response to the plea in Section III of the poem:

> Lord, I am not worthy
> Lord, I am not worthy
> but speak the word only.
>
> (*CPP* 93)

It is a solicitation of absolute humility: "Lord, I am not worthy" reiterates the self-doubts of the

---

[57] W.B. Yeats, "Our Need for Religious Sincerity," *Criterion* IV.2 (April 1926): 308.

supplicant.[58] Just as for the Roman Centurion who spoke the words in Matthew 8.8, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed", there are no doubts as to the power of the Word once spoken. Such a leap of faith stretches over great religious, political and social distances and gives the exiled speaker hope.

These words are also used to cover the great distance between God and man when they are spoken in the Mass just before the body of Christ is received by man at communion. The three utterances in Matthew's Gospel, the Mass, and *Ash-Wednesday*, of the phrase "Lord, I am not worthy / But speak the word only", are all examples of great humility, and of lack of confidence in one's own ability to achieve salvation. Yet all three utterances express an aspiration of a faith outside oneself and a hope for the redemption of others, whether it be a concern for one's child; one's fellow communicants and the whole Church; or one's colleagues, peers, family and countrymen. This is the exemplification of the very notion of unselfish and great poetry as expressed in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and of Eliot's own thoughts on religion - that it is "above oneself". Even if the speaker feels that he is unworthy, the Word can still be spoken on behalf of others and there is the hope of renewal through communion.

A concern for the renewal of the spiritual health of the world is reflected in another allusion to a New

---

[58] This is also mentioned in Eloise Knapp Hay, *T.S. Eliot's Negative Way* (Harvard: Harvard UP, 1982) 93.

Testament phrase, "redeem the time" (*CPP* 94), which both St. Paul and Eliot use in different contexts. Thus the earthly word once uttered, in poetry, in prayer, or in liturgy, is a means of direct communication with the supernatural for the same purpose: the world must be saved from evil by the strengthening of the Church through the faith and works of men. By "works", Paul means the active search for wisdom: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5.15-16). Eliot sees this search for wisdom as an "unread vision" which brings hope to a dying world threatened by the "gilded hearse" of folly and evil in Section IV:

> ...restoring
> With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem
> The time. Redeem
> The unread vision in the higher dream
> (*CPP* 94).

St. Paul urges the faithful to set an example to others:

> Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.
> (Colossians 4:5-6).

The "new verse" is perhaps Eliot's way of seasoning his speech with salt. It is the search for grace, which is the "unread vision". To redeem the time is also to accept salvation, if one allows the word to be spoken: "Redeem the time, redeem the dream / The token of the Word unheard, unspoken" (*CPP* 95).

He takes the words in Colossians to heart in "Thoughts After Lambeth", bringing what he sees as St. Paul's wisdom, and the wisdom of others, to be instruments of hope in the oncoming disaster of the World separating itself from the Church and succumbing to evil:

> The experiment [of the World establishing a non-Christian mentality] will fail; but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse; meanwhile redeeming the time: so that the Faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and to rebuild civilization, and save the World from suicide.[59]

In *Ash-Wednesday*, we watch the speaker rescuing himself from his own spiritual suicide, and in "Thoughts After Lambeth" (and other works of criticism of the Church) Eliot appears less preoccupied with anxiety over his own spiritual safety, and he is able to take St. Paul's words to heart, turning "toward them that are without". Like St. Paul, Eliot was convinced that he was writing to a Church which is in a very fragile state. Eliot's Church suffered from apathy and disunity from within as well as from without, as St. Paul's Church suffered from persecution without and doubt within. Both have a sense of desperate immediacy, waiting for disaster and hoping for the salvation of the Second Coming, which is the ultimate renewal, and an act of turning full circle. This act of turning is difficult, even tortuous, but in

---

[59] "Thoughts After Lambeth," *SE* 387.

Eliot's case his turning to the Church of England is also vital to the production of his poetry.

CHAPTER II:

AN ANGLO-CATHOLIC AND HIS CRITICS

"Theology", wrote Eliot to Paul Elmer More in 1930, "is the one most exciting and adventurous subject left for a jaded mind."[1] What unnerved Eliot's non-Christian colleagues most about his conversion is that he considered theology worth thinking about, let alone "exciting". After all, his reputation was as a literary lighthouse which others could sail around but which they could not ignore.

The influence of Eliot's interest in the Church of England on his most recent poetry had taken both the literary and Anglican communities by surprise and left his reading public more than usually bewildered. While critics could generally accept his move to Christianity, they were disturbed by his resolute allegiance to a Church which was declining in influence and was stubbornly old-fashioned in its doctrine and worship at the time. The impact of a largely unsympathetic criticism of his newest poems provoked in him an increasing sense of isolation from the literary community.

The first part of this chapter will present some reasons why Eliot had become jaded by the business of literary critics. The second section will show how he sought to combine his study of literary criticism with

---

[1] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 10 August 1930, Princeton.

the study of Anglican theology, encouraged to so by do members of the Church. The example of the unsuccessful lecture series, *After Strange Gods*, and of the more successful later essays, reveal that what he achieved with this new Anglican prose was not a substitution of theology for literary criticism, but a linking of the two disciplines.

"The voices singing in his ears": public reaction to *Ash-Wednesday* and the *Ariel* poems

Eliot's contemporaries recognized that the basic structure of his poetry had not altered after his conversion, but its sources and its function had changed dramatically. When *Ash-Wednesday* was published, his literary peers realized that the change brought about by his allegiance to the orthodox and established Church of England had, to all appearances, contravened Eliot's own stricures on the impersonality of the poet.

He had never immersed himself in the Bloomsbury set; nevertheless they considered him as one of their own and were dismayed when Eliot apparently betrayed their free-thinking, anti-establishment ways.[2] Those who knew him noted the intensity with which he applied his conversion experience and involvement with the Church to his daily and working life. They watched, bemused and intrigued, as he seemed to turn into

---

[2] Stephen Spender, *Eliot* (1975; London: Fontana, 1986) 129.

something of a modern ascetic.[3]

Edith Sitwell, herself a very unconventional character, offered a candid, if merciless perspective: "'Something deep in Tom's nature,'" she is quoted as saying, "'must propel him constantly toward expiation, to choose his companions from the strange and damaged souls of this world'". She was not far off the mark, considering Eliot's overwhelming fear of hell and the wages of sin which he had confided to Paul Elmer More. Sitwell, like Eliot's associates, analysed the changes in his attitude towards those closest to him. Of his concern about his first wife, Vivienne, Dame Edith said, "'We saw *that* martyrdom to the end'"; and of his involvement with the Church and his friendship with clerics at St. Stephen's Manse, "'then there was that hopelessly lah-di-dah vicar he moved in with - all airs and flutter'"; and on his next confidant, John Hayward (who was confined to a wheelchair), "'and then our poor dear wretched John'". She concludes astutely, "'One can only wonder if his *secret* life is fulfilling to some other degree'".[4] Although Eliot's relations with the Bloomsbury Set and other 'secular' literary colleagues remained cordial, having sensed their disapproval of the changes in his life, he ceased to confide in them and he looked for communion elsewhere.

Ezra Pound, who had introduced him to the "counter-movement" of English literature more than a

---

[3] Spender 129.

[4] J.M. Brinnin, *Sextet: T.S. Eliot, Truman Capote and Others* (1981; New York: Dell, 1982) 221.

decade earlier teased his friend with a couplet which accused him of "abandoning the Muses for Moses".[5] In response, Eliot blithely addressed Pound as "Dear Child of Satan" in a private letter.[6] The two continued a lively exchange of quips about one another's beliefs, but Pound always scoffed at his friend's devotion to the Church.[7]

The confusion of Eliot's contemporaries concerning the success of his later poetry is not surprising, considering that he had apparently disregarded the ideals set out in his criticism in the very personal reality of his latest poetry. He admitted later,

> that while I maintain the most correct opinions in my criticism, I do nothing but violate them in my verse; and thus appear in a double, if not double-faced role.[8]

An English critic suggested that Eliot's poetry had somehow been sullied in its integrity of "pure expression", and that poetry lovers would be distracted by the very nature of the personal philosophy which

---

[5] Cited in Peter Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot* (1984; London: Cardinal, 1988) 172.

[6] Letter to Ezra Pound, 8 November 1933, Yale.

[7] Christina Strough, "The Skirmish of Pound and Eliot in The New English Weekly: A Glimpse of their Later Literary Relationship," *Journal of Modern Literature* (June 1983) 10.2: 231-246.

[8] *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1934) 20-21

"keeps breaking in".[9] This is a reflection of his criticism in "Tradition and the Individual Talent", in which he outlines the theory of the impersonality of the poet, that he seemed to violate later. American critic Eda Lou Walton completely misunderstood Eliot's purpose; granting that *Ash-Wednesday* retained his traditional poetic qualities of "rhythm and sound", she interpreted the "religious tone" in his poetry as "... not the poem of a religous teacher, but of an intellectual man who would wish to renounce any intellectual conception of life and finds the task very difficult".[10]

In "Thoughts After Lambeth", he had publicly expressed a desire for a more "intellectual laity" within the Church.[11] He hoped to achieve something of a compromise between intellectual and emotional expression. He wrote privately in 1929 that he would like to see a new type of intellectual, who would combine the intellectual and the devotional. Eliot thought that a new kind of thinker could not be quickly created. He wrote to Paul Elmer More that he disliked "either the purely intellectual Christian or the purely

---

[9] Gerald Heard, rev. of "T.S. Eliot," *Weekend Review*, (May 1930) in *T.S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage* ed. Michael Grant (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982) 249-51.

[10] Eda Lou Walton, "T.S. Eliot Turns to Religious Verse." *New York Times Book Review* (20 July 1930) in *T.S.Eliot: the Critical Heritage*. Michael Grant (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982) 255.

[11] "Thoughts After Lambeth," *SE* 373.

emotional Christian - both forms of snobism [sic]".[12]

Allen Tate, who was to become a protégé, encouraged his readers not to reject Eliot's latest poetry simply because they might not agree with his views of the Church: Tate said "the poetry and the religious position are not identical" and the poem is of "no use" if one condemns it because of the faith of the poet. Tate implied that a skeptical reader must suspend his objection to the tone of the poetry in order to appreciate the quality of Eliot's verse.[13] This view is the obverse of the effect that Eliot would want to achieve in his poetry:

> Most critics appear to think that my catholicism is merely an escape or an evasion, certainly a defeat. I acknowledge the difficulty of a positive Christianity nowadays; and I can only say that the dangers pointed out, and my own weaknesses, have been apparent to me long before my critics noticed them. But it is rather trying to be supposed to have settled oneself in an easy chair, when one has just begun a long journey afoot.[14]

While these contemporary critics cannot be blamed for misunderstanding his motives for writing religious

---

[12] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 3 August 1929, Princeton.

[13] Allen Tate, "Irony and Humility," *Hound and Horn* (Jan.- Mar. 1931). in *T.S. Eliot: the Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982) 274.

[14] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 3 August 1929, Princeton.

poetry, their misunderstanding of his purpose indicates that he had not succeeded yet in uniting his literary persona with that of an Anglican layman.

Some critics accused Eliot of dishonesty, and presumed that he had betrayed his secular position when he joined the Church, or that he was disloyal because he had not renounced his secular work when he embraced Christianity. They did not believe that he could divide his energy efficiently between his religious activities and his literary efforts. Herbert Read was particularly unconvinced that Eliot could "honestly" have "any other life or kingdom but poetry" if he was to retain his poetic integrity. Read's opinion at the time was that Eliot had given over his life to "'another Kingdom'", and could no longer devote his life fully to poetry: the morals and doctrine of the Church would now act as "'the shadow that falls between the emotion and the response'".[15] What Read did not take into account at first was that Eliot had long spread himself over many interests and concerns: dealing with a difficult marriage; making a daily living in a bank; studying several other religions and philosophies; and editing a journal. All of these influenced his poetry. Lawrence Durrell was also accusatory, telling him

> "how suspect your poems are, littered with Buddhist references and snatches of

---

[15] Herbert Read, "T.S.E. - A Memoir," *T.S. Eliot: the Man and his Work*, ed. Allen Tate (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967) 37.

> Heraclitus and so on. I can't think how they let you into the Church." Eliot put on a very sober expression and said: "Perhaps they haven't found out about me yet? [sic]"[16]

Edmund Wilson was suspicious of Eliot's conviction that modern civilization cannot survive without religion and that religion cannot survive without a church. While astutely recognising a growing trend among some literary people to take this view, Wilson denounced it as mere lip-service to orthodox religion, for he could find no evidence of "force of faith", no "real and living" belief.[17]

In "Thoughts After Lambeth", Eliot responded to an accusation of treachery that had appeared in *The Spectator* because he appeared to reject the sceptical attitude of English intellectual society. He denounced this imputation and twisted the argument, by declaring that

> the orthodox faith of England is at last relieved from the burden of respectability. A new respectability has arisen to assume the burden; and those who would once have been considered intellectual vagrants are now pious pilgrims. ... anyone who has been moving among intellectual circles and comes to the Church, may experience a bold and

---

[16] Lawrence Durrell, "The Other T.S. Eliot," *Atlantic* CCXV.5 (May 1965) 63.

[17] Edmund Wilson, "T.S. Eliot and the Church of England," *New Republic* 58.751 (24 April 1929): 283-4.

rather exhilarating feeling of isolation.[18] Although he had come to support the established Church, he seemed unwilling to be labelled by any simple stereotype. In spite of his admiration of Eliot personally, More regarded him as a maverick who resisted traditional literary styles and attitudes. Yet he understood that Eliot's work would continue to influence both American and British literature: "whatever the *sober* part of the world may think of him", wrote More publicly in 1932, "his name acts, or certainly has acted, like a spell upon the forward pushing minds of his two countries".[19]

Like More, other critics attached great importance to changes in Eliot's poetry and criticism, fearing that whatever he produced next would have even a small measure of the revolutionary effect on young writers and critics that was exercised by *The Waste Land* and "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Yet Eliot did not want to be thought of as the "voice of a lost generation", and refused to be liable to such charges:

> I am not intoxicated by the idea of leading anybody, at present, and I want no converts. It's all right to be a leader after you are dead, but dangerous while you are alive. And people only want a few catchphrases to ease their minds with.[20]

---

[18] "Thoughts After Lambeth," *SE* 368-9.

[19] Paul Elmer More, "The Cleft Eliot," *Saturday Review of Literature* 9.17 (12 Nov. 1932): 233.

[20] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 3 August 1929, Princeton.

Similarly, he had no wish that his work should sink into the respectability of becoming - albeit much later - compulsory reading in schools.[21] Nevertheless, contemporary respectability, like greatness, was thrust upon him. Throughout the years of his spiritual turning, the critics' debate was concerned with which milieu claimed him as a respected member: the rebels, headed on the one hand by secular contemporaries such as I.A. Richards, or on the other, the Christians which included Bishop Bell and More.

While the vanguard of English literary Modernism had been left in a confused state, the literary traditionalists, including a portion of the Anglican Church, remained suspicious of Eliot's apparent turning. At Oxford, for example, groups such as the Inklings, headed by C.S. Lewis, had always disapproved of Eliot's revolutionary style, and even when Lewis had converted to Christianity in 1928, he still disapproved of Eliot's treatment of Anglican doctrine within a Modernist context. John Betjeman, then an undergraduate under Lewis, approved of Modernism, but not of Eliot's sombre approach to dogma, and he founded a kind of anti-Eliot movement.[22]

Even those closest to Eliot barely understood what motivated him at the start of his Christian life. Long before the two became friends, More, a former Humanist

---

[21] Groucho Marx, *The Groucho Letters* (1967; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987) 164.

[22] Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and their Friends* (1978; London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1981) 21.

like Eliot, had reproached him for employing "a metrical form and freakishness of punctuation suitable for the presentation of life regarded as without form and void ... for an experience born of the Anglo-Catholic faith".[23] Eliot quietly took More to task for attacking him on a subject on which he considered himself a world authority. eliot confessed himself a "minor romantic poet", but insisted that he was supremely knowledgible about how to punctuate poetry.[24] Later, More recalled having tried to persuade Eliot to develop a style "more in keeping with the Christian ideas he was trying to express", Eliot retorted: "'No! With that I am absolutely unconverted!'".[25]

Many members of the Church agreed with More at first. Relatively few Anglicans were familiar with *Ash-Wednesday* and the *Ariel* poems at the time,[26] and for those who were, hearing traditional Anglican doctrine enunciated in the Modernist style made many doubt that Eliot was treating the subject with sufficient reverence. Not long after *Ash-Wednesday* was published, he was invited by Bishop Bell to a weekend gathering of Christian artists and writers. He read

---

[23] B.A. Harries, "The Rare Contact: A Correspondence between T.S. Eliot and P.E. More," *Theology* LXXV (Mar. 1972): 139.

[24] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 28 October 1930, Princeton.

[25] More 235.

[26] Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, "A Truly Christian Poet: salute to T.S. Eliot on centenary of his birth," *Church Times* 23 Sept. 1988. I am grateful to the Bishop for providing me with this information.

the poem to the company, but refused to be drawn into a discussion. The gathering, as enlightened a circle as this progressive Bishop could assemble, was impressed by *Ash-Wednesday*, "but none the less a little bewildered".[27] This is the first recorded attempt by Eliot to read his poetry in the specific context of his association with the Church. In 1934, when he was being considered for a commission to write the religious pageant play, *The Rock*, many members of the Anglican selection committee rejected his name because they considered his work to be "too modern, too difficult".[28] Eliot also had to struggle to reconcile modern aesthetics to a Church that remained stubbornly traditional.

Sober-minded Anglican traditionalists would be justified in arguing that some of his earlier poetry contained dubious insinuations about the Church. The often criticised "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" (*CPP* 54) and "The Hippopotamus" (*CPP* 49) reflect a highly censorious and sceptical view of the self-satisfaction of hypocrites in the Church. To a certain extent, *The Hollow Men* reflects a very un-Anglican tone of despair and apathy - even the liturgy employed in the poem breaks and falters. These poems would remain in the collective memory of Eliot's reading public far longer than the prose in which he began to justify his

---

[27] R.C.D. Jasper, *George Bell: Bishop of Chichester*, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967) 125.

[28] Martin E. Browne, *The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969) 6.

criticism of the Church.

However, some of Eliot's ecclesiastical friends, and Bishop Bell is notable among these, wished to harness the objective discernment shown by this new convert. Eliot was accordingly welcomed into Church circles, and was soon introduced to the future Archbishop, William Temple, by Bell. The shrewd criticism of "Thoughts After Lambeth" followed shortly.[29] Eliot spoke out against certain clerics who he believed were not upholding the policy of the Church with integrity[30] - he once disagreed with the theology and social criticism of Dean Inge, the expositor of Anglican modernism, so violently, for example, that he privately labelled the Dean a heretic.[31] He never continued his criticism of bishops after this pamphlet, preferring to have more responsibility within the Church and he later sought a more involved participation in the renewal of the Church's position in society. His continued studies in theology even led him closer to the ideas of the once disparaged Inge, via the ideas on Anglican mysticism of von Hugel and Evelyn Underhill, whom he did admire.[32] Yet, behind a re-established "respectable" exterior, "the poet never

---

[29] Richard Harries.

[30] Roger Lloyd, *The Church of England: 1900-1965* (London: SCM Press, 1966) 91, 117.

[31] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 1 October 1926, Brotherton. An explanation of the term "Anglican modernism" - which is not to be confused with literary Modernism - follows in Chapter 5.

[32] B.A. Harries, 136-44.

quite died who [ten years before his conversion] compared the institutional Church with a hippopotamus".[33]

Modern dilemmas: Eliot and some Churchmen

In his later years, Eliot risked a kind of professional identity crisis. Although he rejected the title and function of theologian, he could not resist involving himself in matters of theology. With criticism from the secular world ringing in his ears, Eliot was inducted into the school of modern theologians and found favour there. The Church of England had discovered him, and it recognised his ability to bridge the gap between literary and ecclesiastical concerns. In this discovery lies his chief contribution to the Church, as he took the parable of the wisely invested talents to heart. George Every has suggested that the epithet of a "dedicated layman" was more accurately a role than a vocation for Eliot.[34] Whether Eliot's laymanship was in fact a role or a vocation is a matter of debate. He devoted his literary skills to a field of theological orthodoxy which embraced theories on domestic and international sociology and culture in the context of

---

[33] David L. Edwards, Dean of Norwich, introduction, *The Idea of a Christian Society and Other Writings*, by T.S. Eliot 2nd ed. (1939; London: Faber and Faber, 1982) 17.

[34] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991. I am grateful to Mr. Every for this material.

ecumenism with intellectuals of varying degree.[35] Latter-day Anglicans call his ecclesiastical work a "lay ministry" - although he would not have put it that way[36] - and it is in terms of being an Anglican layman that he viewed his work for the Church. This is validated by his two-decade term at St. Stephen's as vicar's warden - the highest lay position in the Church of England at the time.

The Revd. Stead, his spiritual director Francis Underhill, and other clergy introduced him to some of the most influential figures in modern Anglican theology. At the invitation of Bishops Bell and Temple, Eliot attended Conferences organised by the Church, and there made friends with many theologians.[37] Soon, they invited him to contribute to their own projects. In 1933, he presented the first lecture in a series on modern theology given at the church of St. John the Divine in Richmond; the "Faith that Illuminates" series provided

> examples of Christian "prophecy" which is required [sic] at this time, both as an expression of the Church's spiritual responsibility and as a torch for the world groping to discover the nature of its own problems.[38]

---

[35] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

[36] Prebendary Gerard Irvine, letter to the author, 21 July 1991. The Revd. Irvine is a former curate of St. Anne's Church, Soho.

[37] Richard Harries.

[38] V.A. Demant, ed. and introduction, *Faith that*

Similarly, George Every wrote, perhaps with the journal and young American editor Allen Tate in mind, that a "theological revolution had begun, not only in Rome, Geneva, and Canterbury, but in Kentucky and Russell Square".[39] A pronouncement such as this may not signal a revolution in society from a literary or even a theological point of view; but as Howarth points out, it marks a kind of clubbing together of writers such as Eliot who did their work according to Christian doctrine, and who continued to combine belief with practice.[40] Such high expectations and sanctions induced Eliot to join a fellowship that challenged him and offered encouragment. The warmth of this theological fellowship was worth mentioning in a letter to Pound in 1936.[41] Moreover, the Church hierarchy sanctioned this Christian intellectualism, so Eliot must have been quite convinced that his new study was a "right deed". There was a conscious extension of the boundaries of intellectual discipline; during the two-year gap between the conception and publication of the *Faith that Illuminates* lectures, he explained that he desired a knowledge of theology for the "sort of prose that [he] wanted to do" because "pure literary

---

Illuminates (London: Centenary Press, 1935) ii.

[39] Cited by Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) 257.

[40] Howarth 257.

[41] Letter to Ezra Pound, 2 April 1936, Yale.

criticism had ceased to interest [him]".[42]

In spite of his welcome by some theologians, and of his fascination with theological practice, Eliot was never convinced that he had the talent to be a good theologian. Analysing his abilities for such a change, he found inadequacies. He was not "a systematic thinker, if indeed ... a thinker at all" and he had "little capacity for sustained, exact, and closely knit argument and reasoning" which he felt was required for the practice of theology.[43] This is false modesty which forgets that he demonstrated the ability to sustain a philosophical argument in the writing of a Ph.D. thesis. The talents he did confess to - dependence "upon intuition and perceptions" - put him in a better position to infuse theology into his verse. At least twice, Eliot called himself an "ignoramus" in "questions of philosophy and theology": this first to More;[44] the second more publicly to the Anglo-Catholic Summer School in 1933. He opened his talk with hes usual self-deprecating remarks about "speaking in public on a subject outside of his competence", and later referred to himself as "the highly intelligent ignoramus who hoped to be able to express his confusion with clarity, and ask the right questions which will be

---

[42] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 20 June 1934, Princeton.

[43] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 20 June 1934, Princeton.

[44] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 28 October 1930, Princeton.

answered by others more competent".[45] It should be noted, however, that this talk dealt with one of Eliot's favourite subjects: international tolerance and understanding brought about by exchanges of ideas - a cause he had long supported in the *Criterion*.

Despite his philosophical training, Eliot lacked confidence in his own discursive thought, nevertheless he attempted to extend the reach of literary criticism. The "Religion and Literature" essay for *Faith that Illuminates* is a typical example of his attempts to discuss matters of theology using a literary model.[46] Indeed, the hidden intricacies of theology and theologians seemed to be the last intellectual intimidation that worried him. Yet it has been confirmed by Eliot's associates and those who have studied Anglican affairs that his work had some small influence on contemporary church history.[47]

Eliot advocated intellectual religious discipline as early as 1928, and renounced any experiments in religious mysticism. He quoted his former mentor, humanist Irving Babbitt, who wrote that " 'true mysticism is so rare and unessential and false mysticism is so common and dangerous that one cannot oppose it too firmly'".[48] Evidently, Eliot was wary

---

[45] "Catholicism and International Order," *Christendom* III.11 (Sept. 1933): 171.

[46] "Religion and Literature," *Faith that Illuminates*, ed. and introduction, V.A. Demant (London: Centenary Press, 1935) [29]-54.

[47] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

[48] "An Emotional Unity," *Dial* (Feb. 1928): 112.

of so-called 'false prophets', and by disclaiming any expertise in matters of theology, he attempted to avoid this label himself. Some secular critics might have thought otherwise but Eliot had confidence in his abilities in critical thought and he learned how to draw on these to the benefit of his faith: "We demand of religion," he said in 1928, "some kind of *intellectual* satisfaction - both private and social - or we do not want it at all".[49]

Some critics doubted that Eliot could maintain this cross-disciplinary approach, and More wrote that the two disciplines could not be reconciled.[50] Edmund Wilson was another who was not beguiled by Eliot's inter-disciplinary attempt to improve the structure of society, calling it an impractical reversion to "medieval theology", and implying that modern "first-rate minds" would find it impossible "to accept the supernatural basis of religion". He was incredulous that the "low blue flame of the later Eliot" could be held up as an example of literary modernity.[51] In 1933, Eliot tried to counter such criticism by suggesting that there is a definite division between those who believe in the supernatural and those who do not. Moreover, a vague belief in supernaturalism after death, he said, is invalid: "the supernatural is the greatest reality here and now. We have to make it our

---

[49] "An Emotional Unity": 112.

[50] More 235.

[51] Edmund Wilson, "T.S. Eliot and the Church of England," *New Republic* 58.75 (24 Apr. 1929): 283.

source of values and the pattern of our life".[52] Here he announced that religion is more than a so-called obligatory choice between aesthetics and theology; rather its fundamental basis is something more than an intellectual or artistic process. The only way he knew how to cope with such supernatural "reality" was to examine his religious practice by using the same intellectual processes that he would have applied to the study of art.

On the other hand, Eliot's theological aquaintances recognised his literary skills and enthusiasm for his new faith. One Presbyterian theologian, John Baillie, invited him to contribute to a collection of essays on Christian revelation. The collection established his role as a kind of envoy because he could "cross the frontier between theology and *belles-lettres*".[53] By 1937, critics recognised him as one "who has of late years done so much to interpret literature to the theologian and theology to the man of letters".[54] A discussion of Gide's conversion becomes a masked apologia for his own action:

> The conversion to Christianity is apt to be due ... to a latent dissatisfaction with all secular philosophy, becoming perhaps, with

---

[52] "The Modern Dilemma," *Christian Register* (Boston) CII.41 (19 Oct. 1933): 676.

[53] John Baillie, preface, *Revelation*, eds. John Baillie and Hugh Martin (London: Faber and Faber, 1937) ix-xxiv.

[54] Baillie xx.jp72

> apparent suddennness, explicit and coherent. [*Eliot's footnote:* In this comparison I am deliberately disregarding the operation of grace in order to keep it to the secular plane].[55]

Determined to make use of his previous anthropological studies, Eliot carefully reconciled his earlier studies with Anglican doctrine; a rather pompous explanation appears in the *Revelation* essay: "It is well for us to study the folk-lore and practices of the non-Christian world, for we shall not convert it unless we understand it."[56] His position as a formerly unredeemed sinner teeters precariously on the edge of pose:

> I am concerned with the general differences between those who maintain a doctrine of revelation and those who reject all revelation. I am assumed to have an intimate and affectionate aquaintance with the limbo and lower regions in which the secular world moves: a knowledge of objects towards which the theological mind is not often directed. My qualification is the eye of the owl, not that of the eagle.[57]

---

[55] "I," *Revelation*, eds. John Baillie and Hugh Martin (London: Faber and Faber, 1937) 12-13.

[56] "I" 2.

[57] "I" 1.

A Primer of Modern Heresy

By 1933, Eliot felt at ease in the company of theologians, and his confidence seemed well-founded. However, later that year, while lecturing in America, he suffered a crisis that nearly undermined his position as a religious thinker and caused irreparable damage to his literary reputation.

When Eliot arrived for his tour of the United States in 1933, he was overworked, tired, and worried about his separation from his ailing wife - not ideal conditions for composing lectures. In *After Strange Gods*, the published version of the lectures given at the University of Virginia, he unwisely approached literary criticism from a self-conscious and dogmatic position. Just as he was beginning to become absorbed into his adopted church and culture, and was becoming well-regarded in this respect, his great error was to apply narrow-mindedly the *mores* of Anglican culture and religion to the United States, and to a field that should not be subject to narrow constrictions of nationality, philosophy or religion. Indeed, Eliot himself was the first to suggest as much in his criticism. In the opening of *After Strange Gods*, he styled himself unexpectedly as a "New Englander" and a "Yankee" although he had immersed himself in English culture for over a decade. Then, he began to describe as an ideal culture one that has an "homogenous" population which can draw upon a common tradition to

form a social community.[58] Here he claimed to base his assumptions on the ideas of Anglican theologians V.A. Demant, Christopher Dawson and Maurice Reckitt, who would soon become his close colleagues. Later, with their help, Eliot would be able to enunciate much clearer ideas of social communities and the role of religion within them. But in *After Strange Gods*, his ideas are ill-formed, and his forum is too secular and too public to explain them properly without being grossly misunderstood. His ill-considered remarks, which ranged from indictments of "impure" population groups to accusing his literary peers of having no sense of morality, or worse, of having a perverted morality, justifiably angered many readers and many became disillusioned with Eliot.

Then he attempted to apply to the works of his literary contemporaries the same rigorous moral guidelines he had applied to himself, beginning with the assumption that a work of art, if it takes its place in the tradition of a particular culture, will necessarily affect the reader. This effect must be positive, he says, for "tradition may be conceived as a by-product of right living, not to be aimed at directly"[59] and if certain authors depart from this tradition even to a small extent, it is a kind of heresy with an inherent danger. Eliot contended that

> ... with the low degree of education to be

---

[58] *ASG* 20-21.

[59] *ASG* 32.

> expected of public and of reviewers, we are more likely to go wrong than right; ... an heresy is apt to have a seductive simplicity, to make a direct and persuasive appeal to intellect and emotions, and to be altogether more plausible than the truth.[60]

He attempted to demonstrate how, if authors should withdraw from a particular tradition of moral codes and then try to replace religion with art (citing specifically Arnold and the Romantics), they are guilty of damaging the social structure because of their immorality, or what Eliot even called their diabolism. Such a charge, applied to Pound and Babbitt in particular, is a severe one to level at one's friends.

Eliot was well aware of the short-comings of *After Strange Gods*, and admitted to More that he felt uneasy about having defended his cause with less skill than it deserved.

> ...Both of my sets of lectures [*After Strange Gods* and *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*] in America had to be prepared under difficulties and at short notice; as this was for reasons which I would not want to make public account of, I desire and deserve no mitigation of severity therefore. ... the field of "After Strange Gods" was one to which my real interest had turned. I therefore feel more regret at the inadequacy

---

[60] *ASG* 26.

of the latter than the former.[61]

By now, Eliot had revised his earlier notions of "tradition" and called it "orthodoxy" instead. In 1932, he said in a BBC broadcast, "... I shall speak from the point of view of orthodox Christianity. At least, I *aim* at orthodoxy".[62] At the time, he seemed to have used "orthodoxy" in the sense of everything that has long been accepted by the Church of England in general and the conservative Anglo-Saxon culture that Eliot had assumed - mistakenly - to be quintessentially English. Critics are not unjustified in their alarm over Eliot's clumsy and even dangerous definition of orthodoxy. The critical furore over the connotations of what Eliot seemed to say has unfortunately diverted attention from the notion of an orthodox literary criticism that he was trying to describe. Eliot's outdated and misjudged comments about "free-thinking Jews" have caused him to be labelled an anti-semite. But critics who have analysed his work generally agree that although he was clumsy in his approach to disparate cultures, it would be inaccurate to class him as anti-semitic or fascist .[63] In later life, he took

---

[61] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 20 June 1934, Princeton.

[62] "Christianity and Communism," *Listener* VII.169 (16 Mar. 1932): 382.

[63] Christopher Ricks, *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988) Chapter 2; see also, Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T.S. Eliot* (1987; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 207; Russell Kirk, *Eliot and his Age* (New York: Random, 1971); and A.D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot, Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) Appendix C.

several opportunities to emphasize his respect for the Jewish religion, and claimed to adopt the Hebrew faith as the ancestor of the Christian faith.[64]

The difficulty is to determine exactly what he attempted to illustrate amidst all this "inadequacy" but it appears that he had attempted to demonstrate his view that the duty of the critic was to encourage the well-being of society in general without lowering his standards in the field of literature. Evidence from two other less public yet more successful papers, given shortly after, supports this idea. The first of these, "The Modern Dilemma"[65] has been neglected by Eliot's critics, but it is worthy of particular attention for two reasons. The first is in its very presentation, as it was addressed to a group of Unitarian ministers in Boston not long after the *After Strange Gods* lectures. Having left a family of Boston Unitarians for a new country, and a new style of religion, Eliot had come full circle as a representative of the Church of England to face the clergy of the one he had abandoned. The second point is more significant still, for he sets the agenda of the policies that he intended to follow in his theological studies for the rest of his life and it is much more lucidly presented than in *After Strange Gods*. Apparently, he recognised the progress he had

---

[64] Letter, "New English Bible" *Times* 24 Mar. 1962: 9; Typescript, "Revised later to be published in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*" [1947?] Library ref. P17, King's; *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1948; London: Faber and Faber, 1988) 70.

[65] See n.52.

made as an Anglican, because at the head of the paper he cites his "redeeming the time" passage from "Thoughts After Lambeth". In this passage, he predicted that the Christian Faith was to enter a kind of "dark ages", a neglect, even persecution, by society until it would emerge to "save the world from suicide". In the Boston paper, after his usual demur about his own rhetoric, his opinion has not changed,

> But my prediction differed from other predictions by being really a statement of what is already a fact. What I expect to happen in the future is merely the sort of thing that will make more evident that what I predict has already happened. It is quite possible that we are at the beginning of the Dark Ages.[66]

This is more than confidence in his own evaluation of the religious situation; it is the key concern that he shared with many of his theological acquaintances. Eliot and contemporary theologians and philosophical thinkers, such as Philip Mairet, Jacques Maritain and V.A. Demant, feared that Western society at large was undergoing a severe religious crisis, and that people with intelligence and ability should work to reform the position of the Church within society, so that society might be redeemed. Eliot explained that the danger was not from the fact that there were so many sinners in the world, but that there were very few people left

---

[66] "The Modern Dilemma," 675.

with a sense of sin. A great deal more, Eliot suggested, feel virtuous and are well-intentioned, "and when people feel virtuous, civilization totters".[67]

Eliot mentions two other concerns in "The Modern Dilemma" which reveal his perception of his own role and consequent duties towards Church and society:

> as the sense of sin depends upon the supernatural, so from the sense of sin issues the ascetic life. The ascetic ideal is essential to Christianity.[68]

Meanwhile, a religious community with an ascetic lifestyle was involved in Eliot's next attempt to repair the damage to his image caused by *After Strange Gods.* Shortly after joining the Church, he was introduced to the religious community of the Anglican Seminary at Kelham Theological College in Nottinghamshire. Most critics assume that Eliot went to Kelham for rest and retreat; enjoying erudite but inconsequential discussion with the clergy and students there.[69] However, further research reveals that Kelham College had a greater impact on Eliot's involvement with the Church and on his work than has been supposed. The physical and spiritual rest and refreshment offered by the Seminary was perhaps one of the most useful gifts the Anglican community was able to give him.

During his visits to Kelham, Eliot struck up a

---

[67] "The Modern Dilemma," 676.

[68] "The Modern Dilemma," 676.

[69] See for example, Peter Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot* (1987; London: Cardinal, 1988) 180.

friendship with then Lay Brother, George Every. He is the link with Eliot's association with Kelham and has provided the following evidence.[70] Although the papers Eliot delivered at the Seminary are confidential, it appears that they shaped many of the ideas and methods which were to affect his later published and unpublished works. Shortly after his return from America in 1934, he gave a paper which is a corollary to *After Strange Gods*. According to Every, the key to Eliot's success in making his point in this latter work was that the audience of clerics and sympathisers was more familiar with certain assumptions which form the background to Eliot's previously ill-expressed idea that morality and a sense of faith have been abandoned by modern authors, thereby undermining their ability to work for the benefit of society.[71] Eliot gave the example of Virginia Woolf's upbringing by her atheist and Rationalist father. Eliot implied that although her work was technically brilliant, it suffered from a great - and to him, terrifying - abyss caused by a lack of belief in any creed (a lack of orthodoxy) and in consequence, a lack of tradition. His tone towards Woolf is not as scathing as he had been towards others in *After Strange Gods*, rather it is one of loss and

---

[70] Information concerning Kelham is drawn from my correspondence with George Every, who now teaches at a Roman Catholic Seminary, and from unpublished papers of his to which he has drawn my attention. I am grateful to him for this generous and valuable help.

[71] George Every, letter to the author, May 1991. This paper is mentioned briefly by Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot* 207.

grief over what he believed was a waste of her talent and aspirations.

In the Kelham paper, Eliot suggested that the duty of the Christian, and of literary Anglicans in particular, was to supplant the role of the literary critic who would not examine a contemporary author for "satisfaction" in moral accomplishment in a work. If, as he had discovered from the critical reaction to his own Christian poetry, literary critics *would* insist on infringing on the business of the theologian and giving out misleading information in consequence, then it should be the duty of literate students of theology to practise the business of literary criticism. Such responsibility, according to Eliot, would have twofold merits: the first was to oversee and administer the position of the Church on questions of modern literary affairs - and this reinforces his earlier criticism of the bishops in "Thoughts After Lambeth" for not taking a firm stance concerning so-called heretical and immoral aspects of modern literature; and the second is to evaluate whether a writer is working "for good or for evil" in spite of his technical excellence. He gives the example that many writers - Eliot mentions Hardy here - are practically canonized by some literary critics simply for their technical skill without due thought given to their moral position. Eliot reiterated his call to fellow educated Anglicans to take an interest in current literary affairs so that they could in turn relate to the Church what the "secular world is thinking and feeling".

Eliot's wish for the crossing-over of the frontiers of intellectual disciplines signals his sense of having succeeded in finding an ideal course for himself and his talents within the Church. Nevertheless, it also indicates a profound and uneasy tension between theology and literature. If Eliot had approached the business of theology with a mind that he had called "jaded" by literary criticism, then by his own admission, his intellectual judgment was somewhat blurred - as *After Strange Gods* demonstrates. His intent - which, quite simply was to add the orthodox doctrine of his Anglican faith to his standards of literary criticism - has been almost lost in the maelstrom. It was not so much that the business of theology was in itself exciting, but that Eliot had given himself license to write about public and moral issues in an attitude that was not normally accepted in Modernist criticism, though, ironically, it would have been familiar to Matthew Arnold. This had caused angry "excitement" in the literary community, and only a guarded respect within the Anglican theological community.

CHAPTER III

"BRICKS AND MORTAR": ELIOT'S ANGLICAN DRAMA AND *THE ROCK*

Just as Eliot's poetry and criticism had changed in tone because of his "turning" towards the Church of England, so, too, did his dramatic theory and practice. He believed that his efforts in drama were a natural - even an integral - aspect of his creed, and he acknowledged the direct link between drama and worship: the sense of ritual in liturgy; the sense of communion between artists and their audience; and the revival of religious drama:

> I am sure that I should pay particular attention to the performance of religious drama. ... I should ... encourage the composition and the performance of plays by contemporary authors.[1]

The first section of this chapter briefly traces his critical and practical interests in drama and explains why he considered it a vital element of Anglican worship. The next section investigates his reasons for accepting the commission to write *The Rock*, a pageant play for the Forty-Five Churches Fund of the Diocese of London in 1934; paramount is his belief that a Christian must offer his talents to the Church. This

---

[1] "If I were a Dean," *Chichester Diocesan Gazette* May 1931: 190, West Sussex County Council Archives. Not listed in Gallup, *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography*.

section shows how he directed his study of drama from its early development from primitive religious ritual to its use of presenting Anglican doctrine and liturgy to an audience so that the performance itself becomes a shared act of faith. The text of the play is reviewed to examine whether it succeeds in conveying any of Eliot's aims, and how it might relate to his future work.

Finding the Drum : Eliot's rhythm and reason

Dorothy L. Sayers, also an Anglican who had been commissioned to write a play for the Church, said in 1943,

> there is no more searching a test of a theology than to submit it to dramatic handling; nothing so glaringly exposes inconsistencies in a character, a story, or a philosophy as to put it upon the stage and allow it to speak for itself.[2]

In his reviews and his criticism of dramatic theory and practice over the years, Eliot had begun to develop a kind of dramatic theology of his own - for which, of course, there would be no greater test than to apply it to the stage. In 1928, for example, he had criticised John Masefield's *The Coming of Christ*, the first Canterbury Festival play, as indefinite in theology and inferior in artistry. The "theological orthodoxy is

---

[2] Dorothy L. Sayers, introduction, *The Man Born to be King: A play-cycle on the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (1943; London: Victor Gollancz, 1946) 19.

more than doubtful? [sic] the literary incompetence is more than certain".[3] Howarth suggests that Masefield's "deficiency" was an added incentive for Eliot to engage in "religious drama"[4]:

> We venture to counsel our spiritual pastors, that they should see to it either that they employ artists who are definite in their theology, or else who are really good artists.[5]

Eliot's cutting criticism became a challenge to his own artistic sensibility.

In his early criticism, he revealed the two essential elements which he felt were required in drama: a sense of communication (rhythm) and a sense of communion (a purpose or a reason). In 1923 he claimed in "The Beating of a Drum" that a sense of rhythm is an inherent and instinctive trait of the human psyche, but successive generations try to rationalise such a primitive compulsion. As each generation of man finds its own reasons, a particular tradition is set up; Eliot takes as examples, "Shakespeare and Racine - or rather the developments which led up them - [who] each found his own reason. The reasons may be divided into tragedy and comedy". His indictment of twentieth-century drama is that "we have similar reasons, but we

---

[3] "A Commentary," *Criterion* VII.4 (June 1928): 293.

[4] Herbert Howarth *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) 267.

[5] "A Commentary," *Criterion* VII.4 (June 1928): 293.

have lost the drum".[6] The ideal drama involves a combination of the right rhythm with the right reason; Eliot believed that he could find, in his dramatic criticism and his own early experiments in drama, evidence of such an instinctive rhythm by analysing the basic elements of modern popular drama. He had demonstrated the evidence of this rhythm in his own dramatic criticism and earliest verse drama.

Also in 1923, he wrote a panegyric on Marie Lloyd, a famous music-hall artist, remarking on the rapport between the artist and her audience, a unique feature of the music-hall. What fascinated him was that the working man "was engaged in that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art".[7]

In 1923, he suggested that the sense of communion, whether religious, theatrical or both, is an essential element of civilisation.[8] Decades later, he expressed his concern over the universal stifling effect on a civilisation of exposure to mass entertainment that aims for the lowest common denominator; it is the lowest form of rhythm and is devoid of a purpose or a reason for its existence:

> A people without religion will in the end find that it has nothing to live for. I did touch on this problem a good many years ago

---

[6] "The Beating of a Drum," *Nation and Athenaeum* 6 Oct. 1923: 12.

[7] "In Memoriam: Marie Lloyd," *SE* 458.

[8] "Dramatis Personae," *Criterion* I.3 (Apr. 1923): 305.

> in an essay I wrote on the death of a great music-hall artist, Marie Lloyd.[9]

His greatest hope was that an audience would experience a sense of ritual participation during a dramatic performance - just as an Anglican congregation might experience a sense of drama while participating in the ritual of the Mass.

While he was beginning to find the reasons for beating on a drum, he was experimenting with his own rhythms in drama.[10] Eliot was delighted when his friend and colleague Bonamy Dobrée remarked on the dramatic movement inherent in *The Waste Land*. Eliot said that no one had really noticed this before, but that it was one of his chief objectives in the presentation of the poem.[11] Further adventures in the rhythms of drama continued with *Sweeney Agonistes*, and *The Superior Landlord* [12] which he had begun to write after he had joined the Church. Indeed, their very existence and the fact that they were intended to be

---

[9] "A Conversation with T.S. Eliot by Leslie Paul," *Kenyon Review*, Ohio, XXVII.1 (Winter, 1964/1965): 14.

[10] Anne C. Bolgan has analysed Eliot's early experiments in dramatic poetry. Personal communication 1986/87. See also Anne C. Bolgan, *What the Thunder Really Said: A Retrospective Essay on the Making of The Waste Land.* (Montreal: McGill UP, 1973) 44 ff.

[11] Bonamy Dobrée, "T.S. Eliot. A Personal Reminiscence" ed. Allen Tate, *T.S. Eliot: The Man and his Work.* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967) 67.

[12] A discussion of *The Superior Landlord* appears in: Michael Sidnell *Dances of Death: The Group Theatre of London in the Thirties* (London: MacMillan, 1984) 263-5.

produced on the stage indicate that he was confronted with a decision as to how his experiments in drama were to be carried out; whether he should attempt to confine himself to religious drama, in cooperation with the Church, or to the professional theatre. In the end, he managed to do both without having to limit his dramatic endeavours to one particular status. According to E. Martin Browne, the director of *The Rock* and all Eliot's subsequent plays, Eliot was at that time being courted by the secular world of the London stage while *The Rock* was still in production.[13] *Sweeney Agonistes* had been produced at London's Group Theatre by Rupert Doone twice in 1934, and afterwards Doone had wanted to produce a series of plays by Auden, Yeats and Eliot at the Mercury Theatre, London, but this project failed because Yeats was uncooperative. Moreover, the play that Eliot wished to write with a chorus would be too time-consuming and expensive for a small company such as the Group Theatre to produce.[14] Although that particular project was shelved, the Group Theatre continued to influence Eliot's work, as well as that of of other playwrights. W.H. Auden provides a useful context for the examination of Eliot's work at the time.[15] There is a sense of competition between Auden and Eliot; and when Auden did include a Chorus of one

---

[13] E. Martin Browne, *The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969) 39-40.

[14] Browne 39-40.

[15] Sidnell offers a thorough discussion of the activities of the Group Theatre and its participants.

in a 1936 production for the Group Theatre, Eliot privately criticised Auden's handling of the device.[16]

Eliot, Doone, and the Group Theatre also shared an enthusiasm for another source of "rhythm" - dance. Eliot believed that both drama and the liturgy relied heavily on the rhythm of movement:

> anyone who would penetrate to the spirit of dancing ... should begin by a close study of dancing among primitive peoples.... He should have studied the evolution of Christian and other liturgy. (For is not the High Mass ... one of the highest developments of dancing?)[17]

Eliot expanded this idea in his essay "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" in 1928, in which it was suggested that the modern ballet sustained drama and "form" in an age in which the arts are so lacking in discipline.[18] The integrated nature of ballet, liturgy, ritual and drama is explained when "E" speaks of the ballet as a "liturgy [because of its very discipline and training] of very wide adaptability" and that "the consummation of the drama, the perfect and ideal drama, is to be found in the ceremony of the Mass".[19]

Eliot professed that it was the duty of the artist to perform for the right reasons because he believed

---

[16] Letter to Rupert Doone, 5 March 1936, Berg Group Theatre Archives, New York.

[17] "The Ballet," *Criterion* 3.11 (Apr. 1925): 441.

[18] "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry," *SE* 46.

[19] "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry," *SE* 47.

that modern man now possesses the sophistication to rationalise his basic need to produce rhythm in the form of drama, dance and poetry. Quite simply, if poetry and other arts fulfilled basic needs, then they could just as easily be put to good use for higher purposes. In 1932, a year before *The Rock* was conceived, he stated in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* that "the ideal medium for poetry, ... and the most direct means of social 'usefulness' for poetry, is the theatre",[20] and suggested that its aim is to destroy the barriers of the "stratifications of public taste" and help to reduce "social disintegration". Good poetry, he maintained, should be understood and appreciated by even an illiterate audience - the type of audience, one supposes, that Eliot felt he encountered during his visits to the music-hall.[21] In spite of the fact that, in that essay, this very successful poet and critic lamented that poetry is only a "mug's game", Eliot's ideal of the socially useful and democratic theatrical experience smacks of pompous didacticism.

Eliot's main object in writing *The Rock* was to move an audience through verse, and to encourage a specific (fund-raising, hands in pockets) response. Twenty years later, and reassured by the success of his later plays, he concluded that he had tried too hard with *The Rock*. He discussed the difficulties of

---

[20] *Use* 153.

[21] *Use* 152.

"writing to order" and expressed his dissatisfaction over the choruses, with which he had a relatively free hand. By Eliot's own admission in 1951, the Chorus lacks the "third" or dramatic voice. He could hear his own voice "haranguing" the audience, and ignoring the necessary balance that would create the appropriate distances between poet, verse and audience.[22] His self-appointed task as a poet was to make spirituality sound natural coming out of the mouths of any "common folk", and his failure risked the alienation, rather than the motivation, of his audience. Lucy McDiarmid suggests that the Chorus is belligerent in stating its opinion about the shouting Agitator and Plutocrat so that the audience in the theatre is treated with condescension like just another "mob".[23] If we accept McDiarmid's thesis, then we can conclude that Eliot is guilty of having mistreated a supposedly sympathetic audience. The uncomfortable feeling that this thought leaves is not unlike the discomfort one usually encounters with his disdain of the "free-thinking" masses in *After Strange Gods*.

Inevitably, people read poetry or go to the theatre first of all to be entertained, and later consider any intellectual challenge or moral purpose. In the end, he acknowledged this, and so he recognised the reality of the "mug's game":

---

[22] "The Three Voices of Poetry," *On Poetry and Poets* (1957; London: Faber and Faber, 1986) 91.

[23] Lucy McDiarmid, *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot and Auden Between the Wars* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1984) 75.

> Every poet would like, I fancy, to be able to think that he had some direct social utility. ... I do not mean that he should meddle with the tasks of the theologian, the preacher, the economist, the sociologist or anybody else; that he should do anything but write poetry ... He would like to be something of a popular entertainer, and be able to think his own thoughts behind a tragic or a comic mask. ... There might, one fancies, be some fulfilment in exciting this communal pleasure, to give an immediate compensation for the pains of turning blood into ink.[24]

It was typical of the middle-aged Eliot to take such a self-deprecating stance, and the idea of hiding behind a comic or tragic mask is particularly apt in his case. Nevertheless, this poet certainly did meddle with the tasks of the theologian. Through his involvement with the *New English Weekly* and the issue of social credit he trespassed in the field of economics.[25] As we shall see, he also meddled with the tasks of preacher and sociologist. And all of these games of the poet-critic who plays hide-and-seek with masks reveal the reasons why he chose to take sides with the Church rather than the secular theatre - for now.

---

[24] *Use* 154.

[25] Christina Strough discusses this fully in "The Skirmish of Pound and Eliot in *The New English Weekly*: A Glimpse at Their Later Literary Relationship," *Journal of Modern Literature* 10.2 (June 1983): 231-46.

In spite of his modesty, his views concerning the use of poetry are the origins of a life-long theory of an élite; that it is the duty of one who has profound faith and superior talents to use these gifts on behalf of his Church and of those with lesser intellect and talents. "No honest poet can ever feel quite sure of the permanent value of what he has written", he admitted, but his last chance of having an impact on society is to work for its improvement, so that "he could have at least the satisfaction of having a part to play in society as worthy as that of the music-hall comedian".[26]

Again, his earliest literary theories emphasised the use of the poet's talents long before he joined the Church of England. For example, he had written in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that

> the poet has, not a "personality" to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.[27]

But "you cannot", he said self-consciously after his conversion, "treat on the same footing the maintenance of religious and literary principles".[28] Eliot was tempted to reconcile his literary principles with his faith once again, and the manner in which he does so is

---

[26] *Use* 39.

[27] "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *SE* 19-20.

[28] *ASG* 28.

an important indication of how he will view his own role in the Church, and further, how he will regard the contribution of the Church to the well-being of society.

His idea of the true poet is one who has reconciled the two principles of religion and literature within himself. Literature, we have assumed, involves the study of "rhythm" and religion is the study of the "right reason". Eliot held that the poet must be able to convey this sense of unity to his audience, or at least not to expect the audience to accept this subjective unity without question.[29] His comments on other poets at this time belie a concern that he might be spreading himself too thinly. By relying too heavily on undue erudition and obscure tradition, there comes the danger that he and his poetry would never attain that spiritual essence.[30] This is another reason why he chose to extend the medium of his poetry to popular drama. It is as if he assumed that such an audience would be less demanding in an intellectual and worldly sense, but he hoped that at least he would be able to convey this search for spiritual and temporal unity to the professional critics. By choosing to write a dramatic production for the Church, Eliot attempted to sidestep the sceptical and relentless scrutiny of his literary peers, because *The Rock* literally preached to the

---

[29] *ASG* 28.

[30] *Use* 68-9; *ASG* 28.

converted; nevertheless, he still reminded his audience to justify their faith with good works. Released from much of the usual pressure an artist would face when changing disciplines, Eliot had scope to experiment with this unfamiliar (to him) literary form without any undue professional risk. Such an attitude - even if unconscious - might explain why a great deal of the verse in *The Rock* is of poor quality. If this is so, and he played down his role in the production, then he was guilty of talking down to his audience. By his own admission, no amount of social usefulness would compensate for indifferent poetry.

Once again, Eliot's critical stance haunted his artistic endeavours, as he had pointed out that the difficulty of writing good religious poetry is shared by generations of poets. In *After Strange Gods*, for example, he bewailed the condition of religious verse:

> The capacity for writing poetry is rare; the capacity for religious emotion of the first intensity is rare; and it is to be expected that the existence of both capacities in the same individual should be rarer still.[31]

He stressed that a poet must have an honest religious vocation as well as an honest poetic vocation and he must respect the limitations of either vocation, as one does not necessarily facilitate, or compensate for, the other. Discussing Gerard Manley Hopkins, for example, Eliot argued that although religious conversion may

---

[31] *ASG* 30.

bring about spiritual salvation, it does not follow that it will bring about the salvation of the poet's talent and education.[32] Meanwhile, Eliot's own verse exhibits a tension between worthwhile poetry and social usefulness. In "Religion and Literature", he argued that "religious poetry" is a "minor poetry" because a religious poet often suppresses or is ignorant of his "major passions",[33] although he conceded that a "special religious awareness" in some religious poets can compensate for the lack of "general awareness which we expect of the major poet".[34] We might assume, then, that he did not attempt to be a religious poet, but simply a poet with a special religious awareness.

The personality of the poet must not overwhelm the work, he cautioned, and the morals of the poet must coincide with the moral guidelines of the Church.[35] This last idea may explain why Eliot decided to experiment with "submitting to the regimen imposed by" a Church committee. It is a shame that his first attempt to practise these best of intentions miscarried.

A poet, he suggested, should desire a state of society in which his works "will become popular and in which his own talents will be put to the best use".[36]

---

[32] *ASG* 51.

[33] "Religion and Literature," *SE* 390.

[34] "Religion and Literature," *SE* 391.

[35] *ASG* 58.

[36] *Use* 32.

The ideal poet, therefore, performs a dual role in society by aspiring to "suit a prevailing taste". By putting his poetry to good use, he implied that it would help, in theory, to create a society in which tastes will move towards his poetry in particular - a rather fanciful and transitory dream for any poet who wishes to grasp at straws of literary immortality.

For a poet like Eliot, who wants his complex poetry to be worthwhile, there is some logic in this reasoning. The sentiment is echoed in *After Strange Gods* when he suggested that, in order to "foster the society we desire", we should use our intellect to sift through traditional systems to select what should be preserved or rejected and to "discover what is the best life for us not as a political abstraction, but as a particular people in a particular place".[37] In a remarkable stance that diverged dramatically from the opinion of his literary peers, Eliot stated his belief that in his vocation as a poet he must use his talents to "discover the best life for us" and also to convince us, by uniting his Anglican creed with the fruits of his talent, what the "best life" is. Eliot believed that the poet has the means to caution his audience against blind adherence to corrupt systems that discourage it from striving towards its own salvation. The poet can act as a moral counsellor, like the Church

---

[37] *ASG* 20.

in *The Rock*, telling his audience of "...Evil and Sin, and other unpleasant facts".[38]

Writing *The Rock*: the use of the poet in the Church

Eliot was given his first and most direct opportunity to offer his talents to the Church when he was commissioned by Bishop Bell and Bell's director of ecclesiastical drama, E. Martin Browne, to write *The Rock*. To his professional benefit, *The Rock* afforded him an opportunity to write for the theatre, and so to reach a wider audience than had been possible with *Sweeney Agonistes* and *The Superior Landlord*. The pageant's popular success among fellow Anglicans, if not its artistic achievement, earned him the esteem of many Church leaders and laity who, because they might not have been familiar with his critical and theological discourse, would not otherwise have been aware of his efforts to integrate his art into the Church.

Writing the pageant was a practical gift to the Church of England because it raised funds to build new churches. It was also a chance for him to express his views on the role of the Church in society and on various political and economic dilemmas of the time; *The Rock* touches on the problems of unemployment and the ethics of building churches in spite of severe housing problems in London. A year earlier, Eliot had jokily responded to Pound's accusation that Eliot was

---

[38] *The Rock: a Pageant Play produced for the Forty-Five Churches Fund*, Sadler's Wells Theatre (London: Faber and Faber, 1934) 42.

in league with "episcoaple slum owners" (sic). Eliot assured Pound that he would investigate the matter if Pound could substantiate his allegation.[39] Lastly, quite simply, the drama offered a chance for Eliot to reach a new audience and to provide popular entertainment, for: "If it commemorates a public occasion, or celebrates a festival, or decorates a religious rite, or amuses a crowd, so much the better".[40] Because of such statements, some members of the Church, recognising the considerable talent of a man of letters and earnest convictions, decided to make use of Eliot. They realised that as he had written in "Lancelot Andrewes", "a Church is to be judged by its intellectual fruits".[41]

Members of the Forty-Five Churches Fund committee were at first reluctant to invite Eliot to take on the commission because they considered his poetry was "too modern, too difficult". They wanted a pageant whose popular appeal would be vital to its material success.[42] Browne, however, recognized Eliot's stature as a poet, his enthusiastic fervour as a recent convert, and his willingness to "submit to the regimen imposed by a commission, and to work for a specific purpose".[43] Eliot was chosen.

---

[39] Letter to Ezra Pound, 8 November 1933, Yale.

[40] *Use* 155-6.

[41] "Lancelot Andrewes," *SE* 180.

[42] Browne 6.

[43] Browne 6.

The original plan of the Committee was that the scenario should be worked out by the Committee and Browne and that Eliot should simply produce the dialogue and songs to order. Eventually, they decided to consult Eliot so that he could adapt his dialogue and verse more easily and to give him the chance to introduce his choruses to a dramatic production. The script was continually revised by Eliot and then again by the committee, as well as by the actors, to accommodate the constant demands and limitations of an amateur production until just before the first presentation. The idea of producing cooperative poetry and dealing with amateur actors was, for Eliot, something of a rude awakening to the realities of dealing with Church committees and low-budget drama.[44] Like *The Rock*'s character Rahere, the builder of St. Bartholomew's, Eliot seemed to think of himself as a moonlighting jester, "amusing servants and children" in order to raise funds to build churches (*Rock* 27).

In spite of these obstacles, Eliot continued to inject some of his own theories on the sense of communion into his composition. His goal was to produce entirely modern theatre which would draw on the best traditions of religious drama and popular entertainment. Indeed, he hoped that *The Rock* would be a suitable means of uniting orthodox faith and modern literary style. When he sent a copy of the text to More, he hoped More would approve of the verse choruses

---

[44] Letter to Rupert Doone, 25 May, 1934, Berg Group Theatre Archives, New York.

since they seemed to Eliot an extension of his literary gifts. Eliot was anxious to know whether More found as deep a division between "'actuality of form'" and "'actuality of content'" as More had done in the play's predecessors.[45] *The Rock* depicts diverse extremes from the high drama of the Mass to base clashes between political and economic groups; it is a very untraditional combination of elements that seeks to encourage a new harmony between Anglican doctrine and the role of the Church in society. This pageant is one of many contemporary attempts to re-introduce the relevance of Church doctrine and liturgy to modern society. A.G. Hebert, whose *Liturgy and Society* was sponsored by Eliot at Faber and Faber, gives this testimony to the revival of ecclesiastical entertainment:

> It will give an opportunity to sum up much that we have had to say about the Liturgy, dogma, the Bible and religious symbolism in general, and in particular to say something about modern church architecture, which is already providing an outward expression of the new spirit in the Church: .... One of the greatest expressions in poetry of the new spirit [is] *The Rock*, by Mr. Eliot...[46]

As we have seen, the preservation of church buildings, and the building of new churches was a pet project of

---

[45] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 20 June 1934, Princeton.

[46] A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935) 237.

Eliot, and it is obvious that he believed his duty towards the Church lay in all aspects of its presence in society - whether aesthetic, practical or dogmatic.

Early indications of Eliot's wide-ranging interest in various religious and political issues appear throughout *The Rock*. Because the pageant is a history of the Church in London from its earliest times, he discovered the questions that his adopted Church has been trying to answer, or evade, since its foundation. He spent the rest of his professional and private life trying to discover solutions to these problems.

His first and most fundamental concern was that the modern Church was in a state of crisis. Having lost its influence in all aspects of society, it seemed to stagnate, as declining church attendances and public apathy affirmed: "the Church does not seem to be wanted/ In country or in suburb; and in the town / Only for important weddings" (*Rock* 8). He feared that things would merely get worse in the near future. Hebert also prophesied doom: "It is not unlikely that in days to come the Church will have to lose her temporalities, vested interests, and privileges".[47] The answer, insisted Hebert, lay in the Church manipulating this decline to build up its strength from within and he quotes from *The Rock* again:

> I say to you: *Make perfect your will.*
> I say: take no thought of the harvest,
> But only of proper sowing. (*Rock* 9).

---

[47] Hebert 260.

The character of Ethelbert ('Bert) the builder in *The Rock*, is, like the Chorus, the author's mouthpiece, and he addresses the practical problems of the Church, while the Chorus addresses the more eternal. 'Bert even is allowed to echo one of Eliot's ideas in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and to herald the thematic backbone of the *Four Quartets*:

> There's some new notion about time, what says that the past - what's be'ind you - is what's goin' to 'appen in the future, bein' as the future 'as already 'append. I 'aven't 'ad time to get the 'ang of it yet; but when I read about all those old blokes they seems much like us...(*Rock* 15-16).

Through Ethelbert's various skills as builder and street philosopher, - "Us 'ere, I says, Fred, is doin' somethink which is more 'n just bricks and mortar"(*Rock* 13) - Eliot emphasises the various talents that a Christian can use to build the Church from within: "you try puttin' in a extra ten minutes every night in the cause o' religion ..."(*Rock* 11).

There are also wry intimations of Eliot's own various abilities: "I reckon you think you're something like a bank clerk" (*Rock* 11); as a member of the intelligentsia, "If I 'as little brains as 'im I might be a contractor myself by now; but bein' a intellectual, I'm only a foreman"(*Rock* 24); as a publisher: "Many are engaged in writing books and printing them, / Much is your reading but not the Word of God" (*Rock* 29); and a combination of all of the

above - the Eliot who desperately sought a meaning for his work: "And they write innumerable books; being too vain and distracted for silence: seeking every one after his own elevation, and dodging his emptiness" (*Rock* 39).

Eliot's experience as a bank clerk is relevant here, because he uses Ethelbert to expound on the virtues of Social Credit, another example of his later dabbling in economics; he firmly believed that a socialist economy would help the Church. Ethelbert confidently lectures in some detail about the corruption of modern banking systems (*Rock* 12). Lloyd's Bank, Eliot's former employers, would not have been amused. Then there is an echo of Eliot's statement in the *Criterion* that a church must not be run on profit lines like a business: "Nah, then: you take a church. There ain't no profit about that. It's for you and me" (*Rock* 12). A similar wry observation that a church is not to be run like a theatre is repeated later in the play by the character of Blomfield: "I was told that the new churches were only half filled! as if a church was run like a theatre!" (*Rock* 54).

Meanwhile, the Chorus is dealing with Eliot's notion of the unity of Church:

> You, have you built well, have you forgotten the corner stone?
> "Our citizenship is in Heaven"; yes, but that is the model
> and type of your citizenship upon earth

(*Rock* 20)

and the building of a community, or society, based on the Church:

> What life have you if you have not life together?
> There is no life that is not in community,
> And no community not lived in praise of GOD
> (*Rock* 21).

This scenario combines the idea of past and future traditions with a sense of communion when the ghosts of Rahere's medieval workmen come to the aid of 'Bert and his builders, so that they are literally a community building on the traditions of the past to make something new in the present (*Rock* 28). The Chorus "We build in vain unless the LORD build with us" deals also with the idea of the Christian community in the City which recurs to a certain extent in *Murder in the Cathedral* because of the treatment of the city of Canterbury as a model for general society, not least because the lines "I have loved the beauty of Thy House, the peace of Thy sanctuary, / I have swept the floors and garnished the altars" reappear (*Rock* 30-1; *Murder in the Cathedral*, *CPP* 281).

This, Eliot's first ecclesiastic drama, brought him into contact with other Christian artists who held similar ideas of bringing a revised, modern relevancy to out-dated Church traditions. Martin Shaw, for example, who composed the music for *The Rock*, was the leader of the movement to update the settings of

Anglican liturgy and hymns.[48] "Millicent", however, declares in Part II of the play,

> I don't believe that our English religion needs to depend upon Art. Religion is religion, and Art is Art; and the people who want Art can go to exhibitions and cocktail parties
>
> (*Rock* 71).

The tissue of liturgical allusions

It is important to remember that although the Church was attempting to encourage new members with this modern ecclesiastical drama, its main aim was to breathe fresh life into its own functions and thereby to induce existing congregations to stay. Therefore the use of familiar liturgical style in the dramatic communion between mainly Anglican actors and audience was intended to be a common frame of reference to all participants.[49] In a 1928 preface to a little known religious play by Charles A. Claye, *The Merry Masque of Our Lady in London Town*, Eliot stressed that any work that includes liturgical allusions should "appeal to every one according to his knowledge" - which is what he wanted for all his verse drama - "yet the work will have a fuller meaning to those who understand the

---

[48] Hebert 237.

[49] Browne provides the best description of the production of the pageant.

allusions".[50] The very success of a work that makes use of liturgical allusions relies on an audience's familiarity with the origins of such allusions. To put it another way, it is an attempt to replicate the sense of communion felt by a congregation during the act of worship. Eliot warned that such a work should not be "merely a tissue of allusions intelligible only to liturgical scholarship".[51]

The use of the "Builder's Song" in *The Rock* is an attempt to replicate the act of worship in the drama.[52] The simple catch for the "common man" is interspersed throughout the play to remind the audience of the business at hand,[53] and it punctuates the play as hymns do during the Sunday service. Eliot intended the *Builder's Song* to be a popular song, which, like a favourite music-hall chorus, would long remain with the audience. Much later, Eliot stressed the social use of hymns, particularly those written in everyday language, so that they become a poetry of social worth, and are "closest to the heart", thereby expressing feeling and

---

[50] Preface, *The Merry Masque of Our Lady in London Town*, by Charles A. Claye (1928; Oxford: Perpetua Press, 1988). Copy from collection of Stanley Revell. Not listed in Gallup *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography* (1969). I am grateful to Dr. Elizabeth Revell (no relation to Stanley Revell), of Huron College, University of Western Ontario, for bringing this material to my attention.

[51] Preface, *Merry Masque*.

[52] See APPENDIX 1.

[53] Grover Smith also makes this point in *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (1956; Chicago: Chicago UP, 1971) 172.

emotion more effectively.[54] Quite appropriately, the "Builder's Song" was printed separately for the congregation of Eliot's own church, St. Stephen's, in Gloucester Road, South Kensington, for use during Sunday worship.[55] Another example of the blending of the margins of drama and worship is at the end of the play, when the character of the Rock - St. Peter (the first Bishop of Rome) - reveals the real Bishop of London who gives a Benediction to the audience. This is followed by a reprise of the "Builder's Song" sung by actors and audience.

The success of the blend of drama and liturgy falters somewhat at one point in the play, despite Eliot's attempts to allow the allusions to be "accessible to all" in the simplest language of the "common man". The text includes a lengthy depiction of the medieval liturgy of the blessing of crusaders - in Latin (*Rock* 61-64). While the scene highlights the dramatic nature of the liturgy and its revelation of the Ancient Church's attitudes to the Crusades, surely, in 1934, three pages of Latin Mass in the script of a play for amateur actors was bewildering to both actors and an urban Anglican audience alike. The effect of the scene, while picturesque, is alienating and disturbs the dramatic flow of the pageant. Perhaps it was intended to reflect the mystical aspect of the Christian faith, or to highlight the changes in liturgy

---

[54] *OPP* 16, 19.

[55] Donald Gallup, *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969) Ref. E4.

through the ages.[56] Nevertheless, the bathetic "Builder's Song" comes directly after, and a certain order is restored.

The dark side of liturgy and ritual is reflected in Eliot's treatment of corrupt political systems in the pageant. He wrote to Bonamy Dobrée that "the only interesting bit about *The Rock* will be to see how the public reacts to political allusions".[57] Echoing his appeal to the Church to concentrate its hope in its "Youth" in his 1930 essay "Thoughts After Lambeth", he illustrates the misdirected paths they - the youth - may take should the Church neglect their needs:

> They constantly try to escape
> From the darkness outside and within
> By dreaming of systems so perfect that no one will need
> to be good
> (*Rock* 42).

Eliot was concerned that people are seduced into corrupt political systems because they have been promised that the system is "perfect". In 1932, he compared the systems of Communism and Christianity, finding the former corrupt because of its very claim to be incorruptible; and here we find the source of the above lines from the Chorus just quoted:

---

[56] As so much of the work on the pageant was cooperative, Eliot may not have been entirely responsible for this scene - but he was known to mourn the demise of Latin and Greek in modern scholarship.

[57] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 10 May 1934, Brotherton.

> And it is in favour of the Christian scheme, from the Christian point of view, that it never has, and never will work perfectly with imperfect men; if the Russian scheme ever comes to "work" perfectly with what I call imperfect men, then to me the Russian system will be condemned by its very efficiency.[58]

He then self-consciously uses free verse to effectively undermine the so-called perfect systematic discipline of the Redshirts whose "verse / is free" (*Rock* 42).

The Redshirts recite a mindless doggerel ("We come as a boon and a blessing to all, / Though we'd rather appear in the Albert Hall" *Rock* 44) which emphasises this dark side of ritual. Slogans, chanting, a blind dogma, discipline of movement ("there seems no hope from those who march in step" *Rock 44*) are reminders that not all ritual follows a direct path to Eliot's ideal of Christian liturgy "which respects free will, the right of the human being to choose whether to serve sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness".[59] Also in 1934, he had written to the *Church Times* warning about the corrupt systems of the Blackshirts and he was clearly worried about the charisma and influence of a group that was so blatantly anti-Christian.[60]

---

[58] "Christianity and Communism," *Listener* VII.169 (16 Mar. 1932): 383.

[59] "Christianity and Communism" (1932): 383.

[60] Letter, "The Blackshirts," *Church Times* CXI.3706 (2 Feb. 1934): 116.

"I do not consider myself the author"

The Choruses in *The Rock* are a self-standing piece of Eliot's work which received its first public airing in the play without a great deal of success. The Choruses were just successful enough, however, for Eliot to continue to develop this dramatic skill in his later plays, especially *Murder in the Cathedral*. After *The Rock* closed, he claimed that his "only serious dramatic aim was to show that there is a possible role for the Chorus" and credits the professionally trained speakers with the success of its performance.[61] Even sympathetic critics who had panned the pageant grudgingly admitted that Eliot's modern revival of the Chorus was a refreshing interpretation of the ancient dramatic device.[62] Although the device of the Choruses in *The Rock* may have been technically successful, their content was ethically dubious.

Secular critical reaction to *The Rock* was so scathing, and the cooperative production so limiting, that Eliot attempted to distance himself from the experience as far as possible. Many years later, Eliot credited Bishop Bell's commission of *Murder in the Cathedral* as his "admission into the theatre".[63] Eliot evidently did not then consider Bell's commission of *The Rock* as an initiation to the stage - nor, for

---

[61] Letter, "The Rock," *Spectator* 152.5528 (8 June 1934): 887.

[62] Grover Smith, *Poetry* 172-3; also, Derek Verschoyle, rev. of *The Rock*, *Spectator* 152.5527 (1 June 1934): 857.

[63] Letter, "Bishop Bell," *Times* 14 Oct. 1958: 13.

that matter, did he cite Rupert Doone's production of *Sweeney Agonistes*.

Eliot was given full credit for authorship of *The Rock* at the time but it was received by the literary critics with either indifference or disapproval. Several months after *The Rock* was produced, Desmond Hawkins described Eliot, Joyce, Pound and Lawrence as a generation of writers associated with a "revolution in literature" which "missed the Theatre entirely...(with only the shyest flirtation)".[64] *The Rock* was not specifically mentioned in that *Criterion* article which cited Eliot's work. Eliot's dramatic debut, then, was not even recognised as theatre in his own journal. Moreover, Eliot seems to have overlooked his own rule that his work should never be discussed in the *Criterion*;[65] perhaps he might have been trying to expiate his false start in play-writing.

The opinion of his contemporaries coincided with his own view that he had not succeeded in presenting the needs and opinions of the Church in verse. Eliot had expected that the publicity surrounding the production "would not be interesting or vibrant".[66] Derek Verschoyle accused Eliot of relying too heavily on style ("invocations"), and of not stating or substantiating his theme ("the conflict between the

---

[64] A. Desmond Hawkins, "The Poet in the Theatre," *Criterion* XIV.54 (Oct. 1934): 29-40.

[65] Lawrence Durrell, "The Other T.S. Eliot," *Atlantic Monthly* LLXV.5 (May 1965): 60-4.

[66] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 10 May 1934, Brotherton.

Church and the World") with "logical justification". *The Rock*, Verschoyle accused, is an "apologia" for a Church which had failed.[67] Eliot promptly dashed off a reply, hotly denying that *The Rock* is an apologia for anything; he called the play "a revue" that had "no pretense of being a 'contribution to English dramatic literature'".[68] As for "substantiating his themes", Eliot insisted that he was only writing with a sympathetic audience in mind.[69] This suggests that he was quite uneasy about the venture from the start; never before would Eliot the critic allow a dramatist to confine himself to a limited audience. Yet here was the author imposing his (in this case, somewhat élitist) views on his work. Verschoyle rebutted that excuse with the claim that Eliot had remarked to him the month before that *The Rock* "is a play, not pageantry".[70]

"It is hard to be really useful"

Eliot spares the many other authors of *The Rock* of blame, although the text was altered several times to accommodate the limitations and opinions of the amateur dramatists and actors.[71] In the Preface, he politely but firmly disclaimed responsibility for the bulk of

---

[67] Verschoyle, "The Rock" (1 June 1934): 857.

[68] Letter, "The Rock" (8 June 1934): 887.

[69] Letter, "The Rock" (8 June 1934): 887.

[70] Derek Verschoyle, letter, "The Rock," *Spectator* 152.5528 (8 June 1934): 887.

[71] Browne 15-16.

the scenario and dialogue, apart from the choruses and the political "Plutocrat" scene. *The Rock* was a difficult exercise in compromise for Eliot, and he must have wondered if it must always be so; if every time he was asked to offer his talents to the Church, he might be offering his sincere faith and convictions, but not his best talents ("...next Sunday evening I have to read poetry to some students to please Canon Tissington Tatlow D.D., why does one do it", he moaned in a letter to Bonamy Dobrée [72]). If he had refused to compromise, Eliot might have left his audience as bewildered as the Bishop's committee to whom he had read *Ash-Wednesday* in 1930. The accessibility of the tone of his dramatic verse is a problem he tried to solve in his later plays.

Notwithstanding its problems with the critics, *The Rock* was a huge success with the Church. A great deal of money was raised, as was intended, and the pageant was applauded for its imaginative evaluation of modern problems and possible solutions according to the Church's doctrine. In an understandably biased anonymous review in the *Chichester Diocesan Gazette* (which was edited by Bishop Bell), *The Rock* is praised for its refreshing incarnation of ecclesiastical drama and "the whole philosophy of existence offered us by Mr. Eliot, ... and for his imagination, wit and allusion." The reviewer finishes:

---

[72] Dobrée 68.

> *The Rock* is not bromide for the complacent but a challenge to action. To be present at the production at Sadlers Wells was a memorable experience, and everyone there...must have felt the same desire - to see the play performed by the parishes of their own diocese.[73]

Eliot's sympathetic audience had enjoyed themselves; at least that must have given him some satisfaction. If nothing else, the Church expressed its approval through Bishop Bell, who commissioned *Murder in the Cathedral*, thus offering Eliot another opportunity to enter into the theatre.[74]

---

[73] "The Book of the Month: The Rock," *Chichester Diocesan Gazette* July 1934: 308.

[74] R.C.D. Jasper, *George Bell: Bishop of Chichester* (London: Oxford UP, 1967) 125-126.

CHAPTER IV:

"THE RIGHT DEED": REVIVAL IN THE CATHEDRAL

> Surely it is the great task of the religious artist, musician, and even the creative writer, to realise religious feeling in the terms of his own time.[1]

If this remark of Eliot - which sounds like a Christianised update of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" - refers to his own experience while writing religious drama in 1934 and 1935, then it is justified. This observation is only valid in hindsight; it was written nearly twenty years later in 1951.

Before *Murder in the Cathedral* was produced, Eliot was concerned about the artistic failure of *The Rock*. In his typical self-deprecating manner, he remarked that he had nothing but a "brilliant future behind him".[2] Evidently, he had much to learn and had to find a means to do so while maintaining his professional integrity.

His lack of confidence in his success was a problem largely of his own making, as he was praised for having breathed new life into the Church's public image. One reviewer in *The Spectator*, in 1934, had held him up as an example to "unbelievers" who saw the Church of England as only a weak social group. Eliot was heralded as a

---

[1] "The Value and Use of Cathedrals Today," *Friends of Chichester Cathedral Annual Report* 1950/1951: 20. Worthing Reference Library.

[2] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 11 July 1934, Brotherton.

"believer" who was not apologetic about his faith and in "Mr. Eliot's *The Rock* is heard the defiant note" of the faithful. This, said the reviewer, would contrast with the moan of a "timid, compromising apologetic Church, which puts its distinctive gift in the background...".[3] The secular public was beginning to recognise - if not accept - Eliot as a vibrant voice of the Church.

The commission to write the second play of the Canterbury Festival, *Murder in the Cathedral*, was a valuable opportunity both to make his entrance into the world of theatre, and to test his own theological ideas on the role of the Church in society. He would also be able to expand his dramatic experience (through which he would design fundamental patterns for his subsequent plays); and to exercise his talents fruitfully.

This chapter takes as its centre of concern the play *Murder in the Cathedral*,[4] which, because of its structure, setting and subject, becomes at once a model, metaphor, and incarnation of Eliot's theories on the role of the Church; on the idea of the use of talents; and on modern religious and secular drama. The first section will reveal some of Eliot's theories on the function of ecclesiastical institutions and on the role of the contemporary artist in relation to them. The next section will examine the text and production of the play

---

[3] Laicus Ignotus ["Unknown Layman"], "What Does the Church Stand For?" *The Spectator* CLIII.4446 (12 Oct. 1934): 516-17.

[4] *Murder in the Cathedral* performed at the Canterbury Festival, 1935, *T.S. Eliot: The Collected Poems and Plays* (1967; London: Faber and Faber, 1987).

to see how his ideas on the presentation of liturgy and ritual in dramatic art are developed and how he illustrated contemporary Christian issues that concerned him. The last section will evaluate briefly the impact of the play on the Church of England.

"The handmaid of the beauty of holiness": ecclesiastical drama

Eliot had been maintaining ties with parish church drama and pageantry in previous years through Fr. Cheetham, the Vicar of his parish. In a tribute to Fr. Cheetham in 1956, Eliot praises the priest for his skills as a producer and stage-manager "with a talent for invention and improvisation" which was particularly devoted to dramatic observances of the Church calendar, although Eliot makes the point that

> Fr. Cheetham has never exercised these gifts for their own sake, but to the glory of God; and the beauty of art, ritual and music was always the handmaid of the beauty of holiness.[5]

It might have been easier for Eliot to talk of the spiritual wealth gained by seeking the "handmaid" in this 1956 article after he had tasted the comfort and financial security that came from the success of the *Four Quartets* and of his dramatic works, but the summer of 1934 brought doubts about the extent of his own talents. Despite his dissatisfaction with *The Rock*, that the reward for such good deeds should come from the Church in

---

[5] "Fr. Cheetham Retires from Gloucester Road," *Church Times* CXXXIX.4856 (9 Mar. 1956): 12.

the form of another commission for a dramatic work would have appeared quite fortuitous. He later came to rely on *Murder in the Cathedral* for income. He mentioned in 1936 that it was playing in the professional theatre but to half-full houses, and he hoped that it would have better attendances and so earn more money.[6]

Eliot did appreciate and recognize the great opportunity given to him by the Church as an educational experience as well as an access into professional theatre. Drama that refers to the Church calendar, saints' days and Biblical themes, he suggested in 1937, should be written specifically for Cathedrals and parish churches. In this way drama should become an integral part of the worship of the congregation.[7] Such occasions would prove to be ideal opportunities to practise his art. At the same time the young dramatist might be warned that, though rewarding, this could be "a very weary process", but he might

> feel that he is doing something that has a use to others, and is not *merely* a part of his own education towards some eventual popular success.[8]

---

[6] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 14 December [1936], Brotherton.

[7] "Religious Drama: Mediaeval and Modern," *University of Edinburgh Journal* IX.1 (Autumn 1937): 8-17.

[8] "Religious Drama: Mediaeval and Modern" (1937): 14-15.

"If I Were a Dean": the value of Anglican art

Eliot may have sown the seed of the idea of the Canterbury Festivals which grew into a forum for his own play. In a recently discovered 1931 article in Bishop Bell's *Chichester Diocesan Gazette*, Eliot introduced the notion of the modern tradition of religious art within the context of Anglican institutions.[9] With Bell, Eliot shared the great aesthetic enthusiasm for using all media of modern art on behalf of the Church.[10] "If I Were a Dean" appeared shortly after Eliot read *Ash-Wednesday* in 1930 and met Bell and Christian artists. The article demonstrates a remarkable continuity of ideas with the much later article "The Value and Use of Cathedrals Today" (1950-1), and reveals that Eliot's interest in the function of cathedrals developed much earlier than critics suggest. Bell, Eliot and other Anglicans exchanged ideas on the nature of religious drama during various meetings throughout the Thirties and during the war.[11] In "If I Were a Dean", he suggests that while the function of a cathedral is primarily ecclesiastical and liturgical in nature, it also acts as a kind of national

---

[9] "If I Were a Dean," *Chichester Diocesan Gazette* May 1931: 188-91. West Sussex County Council Library Archives.

[10] The only record, other than the article above, that Eliot contributed to Bell's ecclesiastical journalism appears in Ronald Jasper, *George Bell: Bishop of Chichester* (London: Oxford UP, 1967) 180.

[11] Victor de Waal, D.D. Dean of Canterbury, Foreword to Kenneth Pickering *Drama in the Cathedral: The Canterbury Festival Plays 1928-48* (London: Churchman Publishing Ltd. 1985).

monument and tourist attraction, therefore it is entitled to financial security from the State. Eliot had expressed similar sentiments in 1928.[12] He insisted that a Dean and his Church must have administrative, ecclesiastical and aesthetic autonomy in a cathedral in spite of government support. He argued that

> the point is that in my Utopian deanery there will be no anxiety about the framework of the cathedral... I should thus hope to be free to collect ... funds not for the mere preservation of the bones of my cathedral, but for the interior beautification of its living body.[13]

Again, he built upon the idea of the artist's contribution to tradition and foreshadows the preface to this chapter:

> I prefer ... a church which shows the loving attempts of generation after generation, each according to its own notions of beauty...[14]

He is redeemed from serious charges of élitism in art and in the Church, because he exhibits a genuine democratic sensibility in matters of faith. "Should not", he asks, "the resources of art be devoted to God, instead of merely to the palaces of the rich and finally to museums?"; he adds that a cathedral nurtures art, and enhances its cultural relevance.[15] With the artist's

---

[12] "A Commentary," *Criterion* VII.1 (Jan. 1928): 1-4.

[13] "If I Were a Dean," 189.

[14] "If I Were a Dean," 189.

[15] "If I Were a Dean," 190.

status comes the enormous responsibility to one's fellow Christians, and the belief that such talents will further the cause of Christianity in the world and be of universal benefit.

The central figure in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* usefully forms a focus for his theories about Christianity. Through Thomas, Eliot emphasized his notion that all actions performed on behalf of the Church, and all worship offered on behalf on one's own spiritual growth, should be carried out with the purest intention. The famous line of Eliot's Becket proclaims what was only whispered in *Ash-Wednesday*:

> The last temptation is the greatest treason:
> To do the right deed for the wrong reason
>
> (*CPP* 258).

Attempting to offer practical advice as he had done in *The Rock*, Eliot stressed the Church's role in history and society and urged church-goers to reconcile righteous deeds with the purest Christian intent. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, he depicted the direct relationship between the purest ambition and the attainment of salvation.

He was one of many who considered that cathedrals and churches, once the focus of mediaeval community life, were in dire need of a revival by the 1930s and one Christian critic pointed out that the church was once a "comprehensive institution" as hospital, library, and theatre.[16] If the modern church cannot provide more than the bare necessities of worship, he asks, then what is

---

[16] Laicus Ignotus (12 Oct. 1934): 516.

its own definite work?[17] Twenty years later, Eliot affirmed his belief that,

> as it is the function of the cathedral to maintain the highest liturgical standards, it is also its function to maintain the highest standards of religious art and music.[18]

Evidently he felt it his mission to encourage the revival of ecclesiastical drama, which would increase the stature of the Church in the community:

> The "use" of the Cathedral is for the performance of the complete liturgy of the Church for the Christian Year. ... A cathedral is a kind of monastic institution open to the public...[19]

Eliot used to his advantage Canterbury cathedral's peculiar history as a monument to Becket. History and liturgy are combined in a dramatic form to draw attention to the cathedral and its potential; and one of the aims of the play was, like "most Greek tragedies, to celebrate the cult associated with a sacred spot by displaying the story of its origin",[20] according to its director, E. Martin Browne, who recognised Eliot's interest in ritual and religion. Writing on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the first performance of *Murder in the*

---

[17] Laicus Ignotus (12 Oct. 1934): 517.

[18] "The Value and Use of Cathedrals in England Today" 1950/51: 21.

[19] "The Value and Use of Cathedrals in England Today" 1950/51: 20.

[20] E. Martin Browne *The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969.) 37.

Cathedral, one critic accurately called the play "modern ritual theatre".[21]

Nevertheless, Browne glosses over the effectiveness of Eliot's manipulation of the full horror of a murder committed in a sacred institution. Eliot was acutely aware of the power of the location and setting of his subject matter, but chose to stage the performances in the Chapter House, believing it would be in bad taste to have an accurate historical reenactment on the exact site of the martyrdom.[22] Nevertheless, the Chapter House is still in the cathedral precincts and on consecrated ground. It is really the spirit of the cathedral which pervades through the play.

Eliot found that historical accuracy was "burdensome and distracting", and instead hoped to realize a sense that a Becket and his cathedral can be found anywhere the Church is "working".[23] He hoped that those first performances would revive the cathedral, and by association the Church, by demonstrating the powerful human drama which it houses. The building itself is a bricks and mortar representation of the earthly Church, so the metaphor of the characters' relationship with the

---

[21] Kenneth Pickering, *Drama in the Cathedral: The Canterbury Festival Plays 1928-48* (London: Churchman Publishing Ltd, 1985) 185. Pickering gives an in-depth survey of the dramatic origins of the play, from Greek drama, morality plays and to Tennyson's version of the story of Becket.

[22] "Religious Drama: Mediaeval and Modern," (1937): 8-17.

[23] T.S. Eliot and George Hoellering, *The Film of Murder in the Cathedral* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952) 8.

cathedral corresponds to the relationship of a people with its Church.

"Divine Drama": Liturgical aspects

The support of the Church allowed Eliot to continue his explorations in the literary presentation of the nature of relationships between ritual, ballet, and the Mass. These interests manifest themselves with subtlety in the depiction of Thomas Becket as a mythical hero who duels with his own spiritual pride and becomes a martyr in the eyes of his people. His sacrificial death in the winter is the culmination of seven barren years of the "living and partly living" people of Canterbury. Those tribal "simple people", the Chorus, beat time and maintain the rhythm throughout the play. The springlike rebirth is promised by Thomas's sainthood through his redemption. Even Eliot's involvement with the Group Theatre had some influence on the liturgical aspect of *Murder in the Cathedral.* Rupert Doone, the director of that theatre, is credited with suggesting that the Tempters in the play should be figments of Thomas Becket's imagination, not historical figures as Eliot had originally planned. Thus, changing the Tempters to phantasms of Becket's conscience can be regarded as part of the ritual of the Mass, for the examination of one's conscience is an essential feature of the Mass.[24]

---

[24] Michael Sidnell, *Dances of Death: The Group Theatre of London in the Thirties* (London: Macmillan, 1984) 107.

The Church calendar, which Eliot mentioned in connection with ecclesiastical dramatic production, becomes an integral part of *Murder in the Cathedral* through the portrayal of the feasts of St Stephen, the Holy Innocents, and St John the Evangelist. It is both a dramatic device, to indicate the passage of time between the two parts of the play, and to reinforce the theme of martyrdom. "E" in Eliot's "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" explains how this works:

> ... if you consider the ritual of the Church during the cycle of the year, you have the complete drama represented. The Mass is a small drama, having all the unities, but in the Church year you have represented the full drama of creation.[25]

Also borrowed from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* is the Banner Scene which depicts the passing of time by the various feast-days after Christmas. As the Priests process through the cathedral, they quote from the proper readings prescribed for each day. These readings all deal with the theme of martyrdom, rejection of prophets, and forgiveness.

The sermon in *Murder in the Cathedral* was borrowed from Becket's own, and is the most obvious indication of the Mass-like tone of the play. Eliot had waited a long time to experiment with his notion of preacher as artist. As we know from his study of the sermons of Andrewes and Donne, Eliot considered the homiletic form an art; thus

---

[25] "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry," *SE* 46-8.

the presentation of Thomas's sermon in this play illustrates the archbishop's role as an artist figure. In deciding what actions to take, Thomas, like an artist who shapes his material, moulds the events in the play and influences the fates of the other characters. In a 1919 book review, "The Preacher as Artist", Eliot discussed the art of the sermon and the artistry of the sermon writer. He praised Donne's sermons because they dealt with the "more than traditional".[26] Similarly in *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot combined a traditional homiletic form and the historical subject with his own inimitable modern prose - the "more than traditional". The character of Thomas stands alone on stage, and the audience is his only congregation. This is an essential example of participation, of communion, between the artist and his audience. So the sermon - the monologue - must stand alone and still maintain dramatic interest. "The Preacher as Artist" gives the example of the Buddha's Fire-Sermon as a fore-runner of the homiletic method of Donne, Andrewes and Latimer. This influence had appeared in his work much sooner in *The Waste Land* when he referred to Buddha's Fire Sermon in both the poem and the Notes.. In this instance, he attached himself to tradition by borrowing much of his subject and style from Lancelot Andrewes,[27] because he admired Andrewes's

---

[26] "The Preacher as Artist," rev. of *Donne's Sermons*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith, *Athenaeum* (28 Nov. 1919): 1252.

[27] Brad D. Gooch "A Homiletic Strain: T.S. Eliot's Use of Lancelot Andrewes," diss. U of Columbia, January 1987: 7.

language, which had the capacity for "seizing the attention and impressing the memory" in the very manner used by Donne.[28]

Thomas's sermon is, of course, only a small section from a greater work. Eliot had noted in 1919 that the sermon was only a "form of literary art - 'applied' art as the drama of Donne's day was applied art - applied poetry".[29] What he then wrote about Donne might also refer to the Eliot who would deliver his own sermon at Magdalene College Chapel in 1948:[30]

> ... Donne had more in him than could be squeezed into the frame of this form: something which, if it does not crack the frame, at least gives it, now and then, a perceptible outward bulge.[31]

And indeed, Eliot did say exactly that in private about the poetry of *Murder in the Cathedral*.[32]

When performed on stage, the sermon, if acted well, starts and proceeds with such a gentle, disarming authenticity that a regular church-goer (and church-goers constituted the majority of his first audiences) - used to hearing the text and preamble to sermons many times in a quite different environment - may even be lulled into imagining himself in church. When the play proceeds with

---

[28] "Lancelot Andrewes," *SE*.

[29] "The Preacher as Artist," (28 Nov. 1919): 1252.

[30] *A Sermon Preached in Magdalene College Chapel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1948).

[31] "The Preacher as Artist," (28 Nov. 1919): 1252.

[32] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 18 February 1938, Brotherton.

the next chorus, "Does the bird sing in the South?", the audience is slightly unsettled, expecting perhaps, to be asked for the offertory instead. How much more striking it must have been to the first audience - the "target" audience - who witnessed the play in the venue which was also the setting. Speaight suggests that an audience is more likely to accept the author's premises because of the historical and ecclesiastical associations of the place.[33]

The Mass, the highest Christian celebration of faith, and the highest drama, as Eliot calls it, forms the foundation and framework of the structure of the play. John Heath-Stubbs suggests that, in the structure of *Murder in the Cathedral*, the Sermon in the middle of the play corresponds to the placement of the sermon in the Mass; Thomas's death corresponds to the consecration of the Eucharist; the Knights' address to the audience is a perversion of the Communion of the congregation; and the final chorus corresponds to the *Gloria*, which is sung after the Communion in the *Book of Common Prayer*. These points are valid, but it is possible to take this analogy further to suggest that the arrival of the Archbishop at the start of the play corresponds to the entrance of the priest in the sanctuary; and the first chorus parallels the processional hymn and the Gathering of the Community. The second chorus, "Here is no continuing city...", when the Women beg Thomas not to come home, is a clever

---

[33] Robert Speaight, "With Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*," ed. Allen Tate, *T.S. Eliot: The Man and his Work* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1967) 185.

inversion of the intercessions in the service, when the congregation prays for peace (the Chorus's version: "doom on the world"), for prosperity ("uncertain the profit"), for the government ("certain the danger"), for those who are sick, or bereaved ("living and partly living") and for those who have died in faith ("our particular shadows") (*CPP* 243-4). Next in the order of service is the confession and absolution, then the Creed is recited shortly before the Sermon. The members of the Chorus have confessed their fear and doubt and Thomas has absolved them: "Peace. And let them be, in their exultation" (*CPP* 245).

But Thomas is left alone to sort out his own articles of faith with the Tempters. He is not interested in the search for political, social and economic power - these he has renounced - but the challenge to renounce spiritual pride is unexpected, and is not in any order of service which might help Thomas prepare. This, again, is Eliot's irony; rather than Thomas reciting what he does believe in, he perforce must improvise by examining his conscience to understand fully what he must renounce absolutely. The Second Tempter catechises him with this parody:

> Thomas: What shall we give for it?
>
> Tempter: Pretence of priestly power.
>
> Thomas: Why should we give it?
>
> Tempter: For the power and the glory.
>
> Thomas: No!

(*CPP* 249).

Of course, "For the power and the glory" also echoes a version of the Lord's Prayer as it is recited in the Mass. Eliot, who enjoyed detective stories, and who allowed the choice of title of *Murder in the Cathedral* (originally titled *Fear in the Way*[34]) to sound more like a whodunnit than a mediaeval Mystery play, could not resist copying a similar parody of the catechism from Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story "The Musgrave Ritual".[35] Indeed, he comes as close to creating a pastiche of the Mass as much as to celebrating it.

Heath-Stubbs's idea that Thomas's sacrificial murder on behalf of his Church corresponds to the consecration holds true in the sense that the consecration involves the sacrifice and ritual offering of the bread and the wine (of the body and blood of Christ), but Thomas is certainly not a Messianic figure. He fights against such an assumption in his encounter with the last Tempter when he confesses "the natural vigour in the venial sin" (*CPP* 258). His sinfulness disqualifies him from messianism, as the Church teaches that only Christ is free from sin and only He is the true Messiah. For, as Eliot wrote later,

> only in humility, charity and purity - most of all perhaps humility - can we be prepared to

---

[34] Browne 55.

[35] Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (1956; Chicago: Chicago UP, 1971) 194.

> receive the grace of God without which human operations are vain.[36]

The true idea of communion, according to Eliot, is not one person foisting his good works or his own spiritual achievement on to others with the hope that they may achieve salvation, rather, it is the shared experience of each Church member looking to their own salvation while joining with others in mutual worship and support.

The Knights' scene with the audience corresponds to the communion in the sense that they are called to participate in the ceremony, and the suffering is now shared amongst all involved. The psychological attack of the Knights shakes the audience out of its comfortable complacency, secure in the cathedral, made impersonal and safe by tourists. Their calm rationalisation of recent events makes them seem far more horrific: "We beg you to give us your attention for a few moments..." (*CPP* 276). The audience is compelled to take part in a tense anti-communion with the Knights. In the film version, this last was made particularly clear when a "Knight" points directly at the camera.[37]

Then the play diverges from the regular form of Mass by becoming a service of consecration, or beatification, in which Thomas's martyrdom is recognized, and once the fear and grief have subsided, a traditional thanksgiving is offered. The First Priest had despaired in the beginning of the consecration, and attached too much

---

[36] "The Church's Message to the World," *Listener* XVII.423 (17 Feb. 1937): 294.

[37] Eliot and Hoellering 8.

importance to Thomas's role: "The Church lies bereft, / Alone..." (*CPP* 280); but the Third Priest understands the full spiritual and political implications of Thomas's sacrifice. The Archbishop was also the focus and justification of the Church's persecution by the King and the priest realised that Thomas is an example to saint and sinner alike:

> No. For the Church is stronger for this action,
> Triumphant in adversity. It is fortified
> By persecution: supreme, so long as men will die
> for it.
> Go, weak sad men, lost erring souls, homeless in
> earth or heaven.
> (*CPP* 280).

The First and Second Priests then try to direct their prayers to Thomas himself in the old Catholic intercessory manner, but the Third Priest, something of a Protestant, addresses prayers of thanksgiving and Consecration to God, and is joined by the Chorus (*CPP* 281).

The prayer of consecration is directly influenced by the liturgy. Eliot's stage directions call for the *Te Deum* to be sung in the background while the Chorus chants theme and variations:

> We praise thee, O God, for Thy glory displayed in
> all the
> creatures of the earth...
> (*CPP* 281).

Eliot cannot resist adding a touch of twentieth century relevance to the following section of the *Te Deum*:

The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee.
The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee.
The noble army of martyrs praise thee...

For he predicts other "great hosts" in Canterbury:

For whenever a saint has dwelt, wherever a martyr
has given his
blood for the blood of Christ,
There is holy ground, and the sanctity shall not
depart from it.
Though armies trample over it, though sightseers
come with
guide-books looking over it ...
(*CPP* 281-2).

In the final stanza of this Chorus, the Women repeat a much less desperate confession; this time they ask for forgiveness with assurance of absolution and the language of the Prayer Book is echoed much more closely:

We acknowledge our trespass, our weakness, our
fault; we
acknowledge
That the sin of the world is upon our heads....
(*CPP* 282).

Finally, the Kyrie ("Lord, have mercy upon us") is offered by the Chorus with a final prayer to Thomas, which recognizes him as their representative in heaven: "Blessed Thomas, pray for us" (*CPP 282).*

Using the technique that he had developed in *The Rock,* Eliot applies the style and format of modern hymns in the play. The choruses throughout have a unified, hymn-like quality to them that punctuates the play just

as hymns do in a regular service. The Chorus thus becomes an instrument of worship, which is a curious reversal of the priestly role. While the Priests attempt at once to administer to the Archbishop, scold the women and debate among themselves, the Chorus supplies the constant and unifying backdrop of prayer and supplication until it has final word and is rightly granted the privilege of singing the hymn of consecration at the close.

When the Knights burst in to kill Thomas, they offer a tipsy parody of a hymn with three stanzas and a refrain "Come down Daniel to the lion's den" (*CPP* 274). It may be stretching interpretation somewhat, but it is vaguely reminiscent of the old spiritual "Go down, Moses...." Pickering has suggested that the Knight's speech is a parody of *The Daniel Jazz* and *The Congo*, two popular choral speaking pieces in the 1930s: "it is therefore a cruel parody on the Chorus itself and, indeed, of the liturgy".[38] Before the Knights come in, the Chorus, speaking in fear and despair, chant hymn-like stanzas, "Numb the hand and dry the eyelid" (*CPP* 272) and "Dead upon the tree, my Saviour..."(*CPP* 273), while the *Dies Irae* ("Day of Wrath") is sung in the background.

In his earlier discussion of the ballet Eliot warns, "you cannot *revive* a ritual without reviving a faith",[39]

---

[38] Kenneth Pickering, *Drama in the Cathedral: The Canterbury Festival Plays 1928-48.* (London: Churchman Publishing Ltd, 1985) 190-1; see also Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T.S. Eliot* (1987; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 160.

[39] "The Ballet," *Criterion* III.11 (Apr. 1925): 443.

which principle can be applied to *Murder in the Cathedral*. Eliot did not integrate the ritual, drama and liturgy in his work simply as cultural and historical curiosities; rather, he fully expected to revive and to engage the audience's participation in the ancient faith to be revived in the modern Church. "B", in "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry", calls the Mass a "divine drama" and emphasizes the importance of "human drama", which is "related to the divine drama, but both the same, as well as the Mass".[40] So the Mass is balanced by earthly-based theatrical techniques, such as the dramatic suspense and characters' relationships portrayed in *Murder in the Cathedral*, to give the "divine drama" added meaning and relevance to both secular and Christian audiences.

There were charges that Eliot relied too heavily on a liturgical framework in this play, and many found the ecclesiastical venue overwhelming. One critic retitled the play and subsequent religious dramas "The Crypt of St. Eliot's", and another grumbled that : "Audiences could feel that they had not been to the theatre so much as tricked into attending Church".[41] Even Robert Speaight, who played the role of Becket with devotion, doubted his ability to deliver such dogmatic verse: "Would an audience be prepared to listen to a sermon, and a rigorously theological sermon, even in the Chapter House of Canterbury Cathedral?".[42] Eliot admitted much

---

[40] "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry," *SE* 49.

[41] Cited by Pickering 3.

[42] Speaight 183.

later that "on the stage, *Murder in the Cathedral* tends to become a sermon ... actually, it was written to be performed at Canterbury, as a fairly solemn religious celebration".[43]

"For us, the poor, there is no action"

Dramatically speaking, the Chorus has a vital function in the play, but the role of the women, the Laity, is uncertain. It is essentially a Greek chorus, which gives advice without the benefit of divine wisdom or omnipotence. The Chorus is submerged in the temporal and can only rise to the eternal after it has endured purgatorial suffering.[44]

The suffering of the Women is announced at the start of the play, "For us, the poor, there is no action, / But only to wait and witness" (*CPP* 240), and they are cocooned in their ignorance of the subtleties of the political events around them. Yet they are aware of how dreadful the passive role of witness might be and they beg to be released from the responsibility (*CPP* 244). Thomas offers a glimmer of sympathy when he accepts them as equal partners in his own martyrdom and subsequent salvation and all must choose to accept the path of passion in response to the act of murder: "This is your share of the eternal burden, / The perpetual glory" (*CPP* 271). The women are faultless in their ignorance,

---

[43] Quoted by John Malcolm Brinnin, *Sextet: T.S. Eliot & Truman Capote and Others* (1981; New York: Dell, 1982) 261.

[44] Rasma Virsis, "The Christian Concept in Murder in the Cathedral," *Modern Drama* 14.4 (Feb. 1972) 405-7.

however, and the only task that can be borne is simply to act as witnesses. Thomas remarks that "Human kind cannot bear very much reality" (*CPP* 271), and only comes to respect the active role of the Women because of the rude awakening of his own education. When he arrived in Canterbury, he condescended to defend the Women from the accusations of the Priests: "They speak better than they know, and beyond your understanding / They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer..." (*CPP* 245). Later, these words are hurled back at him by the Fourth Tempter: "You know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer..." (*CPP* 255).

Grover Smith misses the point when he claims that Thomas's humility educates the Women;[45] if Thomas had learned humility at all, it would have been from the Women. The Women have been downtrodden perhaps, and are humble almost to the point of despair; but they learn to accept responsibility for their rightful role in the Church. Having witnessed the murder, they are exalted by the demonstration of their spiritual fortitude. Almost incredible is their resilience as they carry on with their quiet temporal life: "with the hand to the broom, the back bent in laying the fire" (*CPP* 281).

Eliot's sympathetic portrayal of the Women is contrary to accusations of social élitism and misogyny.[46] He was also accused for having an élitist attitude

---

[45] Grover Smith 195.

[46] See Carol H. Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963) 26; and Tony Pinkney, *Women in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot: A Psychoanalytic Approach* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

towards Anglican laity (a theological if not social prejudice), which is reflected to a certain extent in Thomas's attitude towards the Women. Indeed, his involvement as a layman started and continued on a very high social level when he was confirmed in the private chapel of the Bishop of Oxford, and carried on a long and fruitful association on committees at Lambeth Palace, discussing political and artistic concerns at the Church's highest levels. Some useful insights concerning the apparent élitism of Eliot and his director, E. Martin Browne, are discussed by William Tydeman.[47]

Essentially, the Chorus - the laity - is the spiritual and social representative of the audience. This metaphor illustrates Eliot's aims for the use of the laity in the modern Church. Eliot suggested in 1934 that some members of the Church have taken the analogy of the Shepherd and the Flock too far, and that many of the laity have become too sheeplike - waiting to be fed by the pastor and bleating when they are not satisfied - a general waste of talents.[48] He wanted both the laity and the clergy to understand that the Church needs active service from all its members. The Church should act as a role model of sound self-government for the State; and should lead the way in social reforms with the laity as

---

[47] William Tydeman, *Murder in the Cathedral and The Cocktail Party: Text and Performance* (London: Macmillan, 1988) 71.

[48] "What Does the Church Stand For?," *The Spectator* CLIII.5547 (19 Oct. 1934): 560-1.

the spearhead of such a campaign.[49] As in the case of the Chorus, Eliot implies that the modern laity should become more *active* in its *passive* obedience to the doctrine of the Church, by taking part in regular worship and addressing social concerns. Eventually, for example, Thomas understands that his responsibilities do not make him the sole embodiment of the Church and he absolves himself of such hubris when the Knights accuse him of it (*CPP* 268). And he recognizes his responsibility only to himself and to those directly in his care (*CPP* 275). The path Thomas must actively choose is passive obedience to the Church, which in turn includes taking or accepting whatever action will further its cause. And, of course, within this framework of passive obedience, which must be shared by all participants, one can respond to any prevailing action.

"We beg your attention": on the politics of Church and State

Although Eliot depicted a twelfth-century milieu and borrowed aspects of ancient Greek structure while using the traditional style and rhythms of the language of the Bible and the Mass, the intrusion of modern political concerns indicate his attitudes towards them from an Angican perspective. The most obvious indicator of the modern political relevance of the Knights is the blunt prose used in their speech to the audience. Eliot fully intended to shock the audience "out of its complacency"

---

[49] "What Does the Church Stand For?" (19 Oct. 1934): 560-1.

with what he called his "platform prose".[50] Tydeman cites one particularly relevant production at the Aldwych Theatre in which the Knights' speech was in keeping, he believes, with Eliot's intention. The Knights were dressed in black collarless jackets and were seated at a table equipped with microphone suggesting a contemporary political debate or a news conference.[51] This, however, also suggests a reference to the Blackshirts and other political groups as depicted in *The Rock*, and so Eliot is continuing to develop his theory that the modern Church should take a firm stand on political and social threats to its stability. The Knights' scene is even more alarming today, as methods of propaganda and mind-control have come to light in many different manifestations. Eliot was certainly aware in the 1930s of the insidious nature of certain mass psychological manipulations because of his involvement with Karl Mannheim and the Moot, the group of Christian intellectuals. Battling the perfidious forces of communism and fascism was one of the Moot's main topics of discussion.[52]

Another political observation of the play is on the interaction of Church and State. The Second Knight makes an almost reasonable case for an ideal compromise between Church and State:

> [The King] intended that Becket, who had proved himself an extremely able administrator...

---

[50] *OPP* 81.

[51] Tydeman 74.

[52] See Chapter VI below.

> should unite the offices of Chancellor and Archbishop. ... we should have had an almost ideal State: a union of spiritual and temporal administration under the central government... (*CPP* 278).

Thomas rightly replies that Church and State could never be completely compatible; and Eliot said elsewhere that the Church should follow the laws of God first, and the State second, and especially that society in general should conduct itself according to God's laws. *Murder in the Cathedral* makes it quite clear that, faced with a stark choice between Church and State, the Christian should not put the interests of the State first, but, though ultimately the Church had to take precedence, Eliot appears to have desired a situation in which neither the Established Church nor the State would appear crudely to dominate the other.

> That there is an antithesis between the Church and the World is a belief we derive from the highest authority. ... a certain tension between church and State is desirable. ... and when the Church and State get on too well together, there is something wrong with the Church.[53]

Eliot was suggesting in this article, and in *Murder in the Cathedral*, that a certain productive tension must be achieved between Church and State in order for both to survive with the highest ideals intact. As we have seen,

---

[53] "The Church's Message to the World," *Listener* (17 Feb. 1937): [293].

Eliot believed that the State should offer the Church some financial assistance, and that there should be respectful consideration of the Church's position when Parliament passed new legislation. If the Church compromised its ideals for the sake of a quiet life, it would become merely a social palliative and impotent in matters of justice and spiritual leadership. Earlier, he recognised a direct correlation between the health of the Church and that of the State.[54]

In the 1930s, he urged the Church to act as the conscience of the British government and to encourage it to open its eyes to the worsening situation of the Church and society in Europe - in Italy, Russia and Germany in particular - and is reported as saying that he wrote *Murder in the Cathedral* as anti-Nazi propaganda.[55] Eliot and many of his Christian colleagues were convinced that it was the responsibility of the Church to speak out against the corrupt ideologies that were taking hold in Europe. Eliot felt that it was his duty as a Christian to encourage his Church to act on behalf of those being oppressed. This was a bold move on his part; history reveals that, from about 1933, the British government was taking little or no discernible action about Hitler's persecutions of Jews and political enemies, including those in the Church in Germany. Such an enlightened approach would have surprised those who were still

---

[54] "Lancelot Andrewes," *SE* 341-2.

[55] Cited in Carol H. Smith 24-25. No direct quotation is available.

shocked by his misguided statements in *After Strange Gods* (1934).

Many of his contemporaries praised his dramatic political commentary. One reviewer, Edward Stillito, an Anglican clergyman and poet, said in October 1935:

> It belongs to the greatness of a play that, even when the modern scene is not mentioned, it should be before the reader's inner eye. While he thinks of Canterbury 1170, he may be in Moscow or Munich 1935.[56]

Throughout the war and afterwards, Eliot remained quiet on the political scene, assisting allies such as Bishop Bell, who worked to restore spiritual and cultural contacts with other European churches.[57] The literary ecumenism that he had encouraged through European contributions to the *Criterion* continued to promote the causes of ecclesiastical and social ecumenism, social justice and cooperation among European states.

A twentieth-century audience has the advantage of hindsight and appreciates that the Cathedral has survived this murderous defilement. The Cathedral is no longer merely a tourist attraction or a place of silence. It is the setting of a dramatic and startling response to its own history and to current issues, and calls all who "take shelter" within it to action. Although the 1935

---

[56] Edward Stillito, rev. of *Murder in the Cathedral*, *Christian Century* lii (2 Oct. 1935): 1249-50 in *T.S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage* ed. M. Grant (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960): 332.

[57] R.C.D. Jasper, *George Bell: Bishop of Chichester* (London: Oxford U.P., 1967) 266.

performances represent only a few of the many other commemorations of Becket at Canterbury, Eliot highlights the obligation of society to the Church. This drama supports his earlier wish that religion would always be a "live issue", and, for this reason, martyrs would still be needed.[58]

After *Murder in the Cathedral*, he wrote no more drama on behalf of, or about, the Anglican Church. In 1938, Eliot mentioned to Bonamy Dobrée that he had found a better medium for dialogue than in *Murder*.[59] Nevertheless, this play rejuvenated his literary work, and allowed him to develop an innovative dramatic style. At the same time, it assured his standing and stature in the Church. The Chorus, for example, was essential to the development of Eliot's dramatic and poetic styles. In 1939, while he was writing *The Family Reunion*, Eliot remarked that he was uncertain whether to make use of a chorus again but he felt that its use in his previous plays had allowed his non-dramatic poetry, as he called it, to develop into dramatic verse.[60]

---

[58] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 7 November 1930, Brotherton.

[59] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 18 February 1938, Brotherton.

[60] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 12 April 1939, Brotherton.

CHAPTER V:

AN OFFICER FIGHTS BACK : ELIOT'S ANGLICAN PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN

"I hope," C.S Lewis explained privately to Eliot in 1943, "the fact that I find myself often contradicting you in print gives no offence, it is a kind of tribute to you. ... One aims at the officers first in meeting an attack!"[1] Once again another cross-over between Eliot's literary and religious interests had taken place because the Church of England and its concerns had taken priority in Eliot's life. The Church's cause became the new arena of public debate in which he engaged. Eliot cordially invited Lewis, a fellow Anglican, to visit him but elected to avoid a heated debate on poetry, suggesting instead a discussion on the proposed union of protestant churches in South India.[2]

The main Church-related activities in which Eliot took part and a good deal of the issues which concerned him and his Anglican colleagues throughout the decade of the 1930s are traced in this chapter. At the end of the decade, these important developments culminated in a series of very discreet but highly influential discussions in a newly formed group called the Moot. A

---

[1] Letter to Eliot from C.S. Lewis, 22 February 1943, King's.

[2] Letter to C.S. Lewis, 8 March 1943, King's. C.S. Lewis converted to Christianity and became a member of the Church of England in 1929, two years after Eliot's conversion.

good deal of Eliot's self-imposed Christian duties were there conducted in private, but many more were public, and he became one of this century's most influential apologists for the Church of England. He used his fruitful "bread and butter" career as a publisher as a platform for Anglican issues and read first any manuscripts on religion or theology which were submitted to Faber and Faber.[3]

The first section of this chapter reveals Eliot's close involvement with Church conferences and his participation in various Church-related organisations. The second section describes how his editorial, journalistic and publishing experience influenced many of the Church's leading intellectuals.

The literary Modernist and Anglican orthodoxy

Some Church historians are assured of Eliot's impact on the Church and modern society. Roger Lloyd for example, believed that "no one could ignore" Eliot's literary stature, and his devotion to the Church "must have made many an agnostic wonder if the Church was as dead and despicable as he had assumed."[4] The Moot, including the published works it engendered, is only one of the many fruits of several conferences and committee meetings held at intervals from 1924 and through the Second World War. Eliot's presence at such gatherings was highly prized by the organisers and by his friends,

---

[3] Anne Ridler, letter to the author, 16 July 1991.

[4] Roger Lloyd, *The Church of England: 1900-1965* (London: SCM Press, 1966) 252.

partly because his fame attracted both publicity and increased registrations and because he was a favourite of the Church hierarchy. Seeking to promote the status of the Church in society, he was resolutely conservative, and it is more surprising then, that Eliot was not considered as a "good committee man," in spite of his popularity among various Church committee members.[5] Revd. Patrick McLaughlin, rector of the St. Anne's House, later St. Anne's Society, Soho, where Eliot was an active member, observed this and discovered that the antidote was to meet him privately, when, in the safety of his Russell Square office, he would make his opinions known. Although Eliot took part in the activities of the House, he managed to avoid committee meetings because of prior demands on his time.[6]

This was an exciting time to be at the forefront of Church policy-making machines, for clergy and laity alike. Through a proliferation of discussions and publications, the participants at these conferences struggled to make the traditions of the past relevant to the modern reality of a drastically changing Britain and Europe. Out of these Conferences grew two sympathetic movements of modern Christian thought. From ecclesiastical Conferences in Sweden in 1925 and Oxford in 1937, emerged the "Life and Work" movement which particularly sought a Christian approach to social and

---

[5] Roger Kojecký, personal communication, notes of interview between Roger Kojecky and Revd. Patrick McLaughlin, September 21 1968.

[6] Revd. Prebendary Gerard Irvine, letter to the author, 21 July 1991.

economic problems. The more theological "Faith and Order" movement grew from conferences at Lausanne in 1927 and Edinburgh in 1937 which in turn led to the Ecumenical World Council of Churches in 1938.[7] Bishop Bell had introduced Eliot to J.H. Oldham who wrote the report of the larger 1937 Oxford Conference.[8] Eliot and Oldham remained close friends and colleagues thereafter.[9]

Several issues, including the following, were common to these conferences: the Church and Christian modernism; debates for and against liberalism; and ecumenical church unity in Britain, Europe and the East. All of these issues either were addressed by Eliot or involved him in some way. In spite of being a traditionalist, as he claimed, he has been connected with the genesis of a new kind of Christian modernism. Eliot's concern with Christian modernism began in part because of his interest in Baron von Hügel. In simple terms, Christian modernism can be seen as arising from a perceived division between theological and revelatory (mystical) aspects of Christianity; and as the attempt by some theologians to reconsider orthodox theology in terms of advances in modern sciences, particularly in psychology. Eliot's potted version of the first modernist ideas of von Hügel and the renegade Catholic priest and founder of the

---

[7] John R.H. Moorman, *A History of the Church of England.* (1953; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1954) 420-1.

[8] J.H. Oldham, *The Churches Survey their Task*: The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July 1937, on Church, Community and State (London, 1937), reprinted as *Foundations of Ecumenical Social Thought*, ed. Harold L. Lunger (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, 1966).

[9] Letter, "Bishop Bell," *Times* 14 Oct. 1958: 13.

modernist movement, George Tyrrell, however, is critical. Eliot writes that

> Modernists thought that they were trying to reconcile ancient feeling with modern thought and science. ... they might have been more successful; but they were really attempting something much more difficult - the reconciliation of antagonistic currents of feeling within themselves.[10]

But that was a much earlier modernism, and revised theories developed over the next decade because of dissenting voices, such as that of Eliot.

The birth of Christian modernism has also been attributed to the writings of William James, [11] with which Eliot had been familiar since his undergraduate days at Harvard.[12] In 1917, a decade before his conversion, Eliot wrote a review of James's book *Human Immortality*.[13] Another sign of the Christian modernist movement, said A.G. Hebert, was that "the best of the crop of books on the Tractarian Movement which have lately appeared, *Oxford Apostles*" by Eliot's friend and employer Geoffrey Faber (1933)," was a psychological, rather than a theological or ecclesiastical treatment of

---

[10] "An Emotional Unity," *Dial* Feb. 1928: 109-12.

[11] A.G. Hebert, *Liturgy and Society* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935) 113.

[12] See Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (1977; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 21 ff.

[13] "William James on Immortality," *New Statesman* IX.231 (8 Sept. 1917): 547.

Tractarian leaders".[14] Also in 1933, Eliot recommended *Spirit of the Oxford Movement*, by historian and *Criterion* contributor Christopher Dawson, to More but was guarded about Dawson's accusations against the Christian modernist movement and its detrimental effect on "the Anglican mind".[15]

Another tract of Christian modernism was *Revelation*, a direct product of the preparation for the "Faith and Order" and "Life and Work" Conferences in 1937 and the International Missionary Council of 1938.[16] This book comprised a collaboration of several essays on the subject of revelation by various theologians.[17] Eliot was the only non-theologian to participate and wrote the introduction from a literary perspective.

Eliot addressed the Oxford Anglo-Catholic Summer School of Sociology in 1933,[18] and twice in 1940.[19] The papers were published in *Christendom*, the school's quarterly journal. Founded in 1933 by Christian sociologist Percy Widdrington and others, the school met regularly each summer for several years. Its members

---

[14] Hebert 113.

[15] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 7 November 1933, Princeton.

[16] William Turner Levy, "The Idea of the Church in T.S. Eliot," *Christian Scholar* 41.4 (Dec. 1958): 592.

[17] John Baillie and Hugh Martin, eds., *Revelation* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937).

[18] "Catholicism and International Order; Opening Address to the Anglo-Catholic Summer School of Sociology," *Christendom* (Oxford) III.ii (Sept. 1933): [17]-184.

[19] "Preface to the English Tradition," *Christendom* (Oxford) X.38 (June 1940) : 101-8; and "The English Tradition: Address to the School of Sociology," *Christendom* X.40 (Dec. 1940): [226]-37.

became a sort of nucleus of Conference delegates and the school provided a continuous think-tank of Christian sociologists.[20]

Other great gatherings at the time were the two interdenominational Conferences on Politics, Economics and Citizenship in 1924 at Birmingham, the Church of England's conference in 1931 at Lambeth, and in 1941 at Malvern. Eliot participated in the latter two. The essential feature of the meetings was their leaders, Archbishop William Temple, J.H. Oldham, Canon V.A. Demant, and Reinhold Niebuhr. Demant was editor of *Faith that Illuminates*, a book to which Eliot contributed in 1935. Demant was also a contributor to *The Criterion* and member of the Moot. Eliot often referred to his *The Religious Prospect.*[21] Niebuhr, whose work Eliot greatly admired came from the United States[22] and Eliot and Philip Mairet read his *The Nature and Destiny of Man* in its proof stage.[23] Temple encouraged spin-off groups from these conferences, such as the Christendom Group, and the Christian Frontier Council (the official front of the Moot's publication, *The Christian News-Letter*) and kept abreast of the discussions of the various Groups of

---

[20] Lloyd 309.

[21] V.A. Demant, *The Religious Prospect* (London: Frederick Muller, 1939). Anne Ridler, letter to the author, 16 July 1991.

[22] Lloyd 306-7.

[23] Roger Kojecký, personal communication, notes of interview between Roger Kojecky and A.R. Vidler, 1 April 1968.

which Eliot was a member.[24] Eliot found this whirl of intellectual theology greatly to his satisfaction. One of these Christian organisations, the Chandos Group, led by Maurice Reckitt who introduced Demant to the circle, was worthy of a mention to Pound in 1936. Eliot assured his old friend that the Chandos Group was becoming more interesting of late and that Demant was its most intelligent member.[25]

Archbishop Temple, with whom Eliot was in sympathy, tempered the naive and controversial enthusiasm of many Christian socialist conference participants. At the second C.O.P.E.C. Malvern conference in particular, some of them wanted to announce new social orders according to the frenzied idealism engendered while still engaged in the conference, without due consideration for theology.[26]

Yet Eliot did not hesitate to engage in worthy, even if controversial public issues. During the *post-mortem* in the *Church Times* of the 1937 Oxford meeting, he complained about an imbalance of ecumenical representation because it seemed to him that very few of these delegates had appropriate theological qualifications, and the conference could not achieve any semblance of unity. He doubted whether a universal eceumenism was even possible because the conference made him

---

[24] Roger Kojecký, personal communication, notes of interview between Roger Kojecky and A.R. Vidler, 1 April 1968.

[25] Letter to Ezra Pound, 2 April 1936, Yale.

[26] Lloyd 307.

> much more clearly aware of the profundity of the differences between Christians ... I for one learned a greater respect, though no greater liking, for the Orthodox and the Lutheran theologies. I wish I could say the same about American Protestantism. ... the Conference will have done much good if it makes these fundamental differences clearer; and conversely only harm if it serves to obscure them.[27]

Typically, Eliot dissociates himself from the "American Protestantism" of his own religious upbringing. His strong bias towards a comprehensive European unity that respects the integrity of individual cultures is evident. Two weeks later, Eliot clarified his position concerning representation, democracy and élites and on the importance of the impersonality of the individual when representing the whole, which is modelled by his loyalty to the Established Church:

> ... the policy of statesmen has to be shaped according to the temper of the majority of the people whom they have to rule. What I fear for such assemblies ... is the insensible influence of the mass; and there appeared to be a larger mass of American liberal Protestantism than anything else. I doubt whether a Conference

---

27 "The Oxford Conference," *Church Times* CXVII.3889 (6 Aug. 1937): 130.

> can be "oecumenical" and at the same time "democratic".[28]

As in *Murder in the Cathedral* Eliot challenged religious hypocrisy and the self-aggrandisement of those who hold positions of responsibility. Eliot was also convinced that the Established Church, by the very size of its influences and resources should be more equal than the others.

The reference to "American liberal Protestantism" in Eliot's statement above is an indication of another controversy; public focus on the 'anti-Liberalism' debate of which Eliot was a part began as early as 1934. Theologian and Cambridge lecturer Sir Arthur Quiller Couch had attacked Eliot's high-handed approach to liberalism in *After Strange Gods* ("'In a society like ours, worm-eaten with liberalism...'").[29] Lloyd, who is dismayed by such an overtly traditional approach and sees liberalism as the foundation of modernism, puts Eliot in a rather august parade of anti-liberals, including Niebuhr and even Newman.[30] A better way of viewing Eliot's position would be to perceive that he sought to balance a foundation of traditionalism against a renewal of liberal modernism. Indeed, Eliot called for a fundamental change in the structure of society; in his later verse this call for renewal is preceded by the "still point" of change. Eliot and others like him came

---

[28] "The Oxford Conference," *Church Times* CXVIII.3891 (20 Aug. 1937): 184.

[29] Lloyd 254.

[30] Lloyd 259.

surprisingly close to achieving this balance with their attitudes towards church unity and to the approach of the Church to politics and society.

Consequently, Eliot participated in a debate concerning the question of the Church's role in politics and its relationship to government. E.R. Norman points out that the Established Church was reluctant to subscribe to any particular form or party of government but emphasized the Church's interest in the maintenance of civil order, and cites *The Idea of a Christian Society* for emphasis:

> 'To identify any particular form of government with Christianity is a dangerous error' wrote T.S. Eliot - who was associated with Anglican social radicalism in the later 1930s - 'for it confounds the permanent with the transitory, the absolute with the contingent.'[31]

Calling Eliot a "social radical" is a markedly different perception of the nature of his work than that of Lloyd, above. Such diverse perceptions of Eliot's position in these controversies emphasize the deep and often confusing changes in the nature of modern theology and politics in the first half of this century.

What Eliot did assert was this: in order to maintain the civil order and to protect the best interests of the Church and doctrine, it was the duty of both a just government and a well-run Church to maintain a reciprocal

---

[31] E.R. Norman, *Church and Society in England 1770-1970: a Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 13.

arrangement of mutual respect and encouragement. As early as 1932, Harold Nicolson, then in the Foreign Office, records meeting Eliot and others to discuss holding a symposium on modern politics.[32] While it is not clear if Eliot had anything more to do with such a symposium, it does suggest a wide ranging acquaintance with the hierarchy of government as well as ecclesiastic policy-making. Making it his duty to be familiar with, and to comment on, political systems, and in relation to the Church, he took the command "render unto Caesar" to heart concerning the latest Prayer Book revision:

> ... according to the Anglo-Catholic view, Parliament has no right to pronounce upon doctrinal issues. ... according to the law of the land, Parliament has not only the right but the duty so to pronounce. To some of us, this is a legal absurdity which ought to be altered - but none of us question the legal right and duty of Parliament to pronounce according to existing law.[33]

Here Eliot uneasily agrees to abide by an existing law, but wishes for that law to be changed so as to support the paramountcy of the Church.

For many in Eliot's circle, the sense of duty towards the Church superseded a sense of obligation towards the State. Bishop Bell (in some ways a latter

---

[32] Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters: 1930-1939*, ed. Nigel Nicolson (1966; London: Fontana, 1971) 108.

[33] "Parliament and the New Prayer Book," *New Adelphi* I.4 (June 1928): 346.

day Becket), was strongly criticised in the Houses of Lords and Commons for maintaining ties to the "Free" German Evangelical Church of Germany.[34] Denouncing obliteration bombing of the enemy during the war, he also advocated the rights of enemy prisoners of war and conscientious objectors.[35] Similarly, Eliot condemned the York City Council in *The Christian News-Letter* for firing its employees who were conscientious objectors.[36] With Bell and others, he spoke for the cause of repatriation of foreign prisoners of war after hostilities had ceased. Eliot's association with Bell is more significant still as the Bishop has been praised by both the Jewish community and the present Established Church for his stance against Nazism *before* the war (which may have had a bearing on Moot discussions about totalitarianism and propaganda) and for his assistance to Jewish refugees, and like Bonhoeffer, Bell is admired as one for whom duty was paramount.[37]

Eliot also participated in the quest for Church unity which was a great concern amongst Christian intellectuals throughout the 1930s and during the war. By "Church unity," theologians and churchmen meant that

---

[34] Duncan Shaw, "The Kirk and the Hitler Regime," *Life and Work: The Record of the Church of Scotland* Apr. 1983: 26-7.

[35] R.C.D. Jasper, *George Bell, Bishop of Chichester* (London: Oxford UP, 1967) 257-8 ff.

[36] *The Christian News-Letter* 43 (21 Aug. 1940).

[37] Transcript, "The Rabbi, the King and I," narr. Rabbi Lionel Blue, *In Search of Holy England*, Programme 5, Channel 4, Sunrise Associates, Ltd., London, 11 Oct. 1990.

they wished to develop ecumenical and cultural ties between mainly Protestant churches in Britain and the Continent in particular, and throughout the world in general. Once peace had been restored, the Churches, strengthened by international support, would be the leading force in the rebuilding of society. As soon as communications between Britain and Sweden were resumed, for example, Eliot, with Kenneth Clark, the director of the National Gallery, travelled to Sweden on a cultural exchange. Bell went to Sweden at about the same time to formalise a link between the respective Churches.[38]

We know that Eliot kept in touch with Bell until the latter's death in 1958 and must have been aware of some of his friend's activities.[39] George Every suggests that Eliot and Bell had cooperated with diplomatic efforts while the two were in Sweden for ostensibly different purposes: "I suspect", said Every,

> that Bell's dates were arranged with Eliot's presence in mind and that this could explain the silence on the holocaust in *Notes [Towards the Definition of Culture]*. He was certainly not indifferent. Possibly he knew too much and in confidence.[40]

If it ever can be proved definitely that Eliot was involved in any way in one of the most delicate and unofficial diplomatic operations during World War II,

---

[38] Jasper 266.

[39] Letter, "Bishop Bell," *Times* 14 Oct. 1958: 13.

[40] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

then it is an astounding testimony to all of his beliefs concerning the peace effort and international diplomacy in Church and State. It might even prove his innocence in the face of accusations of anti-semitism against him. In the end, as Every testifies, his charitable instincts are indisputable: "[Eliot] took a lot of trouble to help people and almost as much to conceal it from them and from everyone".[41]

In *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot affirms his own belief in the success of the 1930s conferences in the light of widening public approval of Church unity. He explains that the effort is worthwhile in order to "provide sacramental advantages for travellers, but [especially] to affirm the Universal Church on earth, ... that theology has no frontiers." (*Idea* 75-6).

"*THE CRITERION* can take no side"

In any discussion of specific aspects of the very wide field of Eliot's journalism, *The Criterion* is paramount as it is the only journal over which he exercised full editorial control. John D. Margolis, for example, has written a comprehensive account of *The Criterion* as an on-going manifestation of Eliot's intellectual and spiritual concerns.[42] A particularly important aspect of *The Criterion* is that, by the

---

[41] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

[42] John D. Margolis, *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1972). A study of *The Criterion* and its role, with that of other journals, in the modernist movement is included in a forthcoming project by Drs. Bernard and Shari Benstock of the University of Miami.

formation of a close-knit network of contributors whom Eliot brought into his sphere of influence, he founded a fellowship of Christian and sociologist intellectuals. Meanwhile, he never lost touch with associates and friends from his pre-conversion days, such as Wyndham Lewis and I.A. Richards. In 1928, Eliot justified his inclusion of religious matters and disclaimed any suggestion of bias in the journal:

> In religious controversies, again, *THE CRITERION* can take no side. ... and will continue to invite the most important representatives in every country, of philosophic, religious and political theory, to express their views.[43]

A consideration of *The Criterion* in the light of Eliot's association with the Church reveals that Margolis's view of his work is mistaken on two counts. One of Margolis's mistaken contentions is that both Eliot and *The Criterion* experienced a kind of "mutation" because of his conversion; this implies a possible loss of integrity as the original parameters of the editorial policy changed and expanded.[44] Margolis's other apparent misinterpretation is that Eliot experienced a kind of intellectual isolation by taking a Christian stance in a "largely secular literary world".[45] Incidentally, More also suggests that Eliot was guilty of leading his

---

[43] "A Commentary," *Criterion* VII.4 (June 1928): 219-94.

[44] Margolis 87.

[45] Margolis 137.

admirers in "two directions at once"[46] - an orthodox Anglican direction and what More saw as a less experimental literary direction.

While Margolis is correct that there was a *kind* of "mutation", his assumptions about the radical nature of this "mutation" might be revised. It is apparent, for example, that to the end of its publication, *The Criterion* never ceased, as Margolis suggested, in its function as a literary journal. As Margolis admits, Eliot continued much the same format, with the same objectivity, by including in its articles and book reviews secular and critical texts as before, as well as theological treatises and debates. But Eliot's long interest in anthropology evolved naturally into discussions on sociology. And when he felt that he could not maintain the literary integrity of *The Criterion*, he ended its publication.[47]

Eliot surprised his readers with his announcement. But, in fact, he had shown signs of doubt about the public perception of his Christian and literary work six years before the last issue of *The Criterion*, and even then he wished to remove himself from the fray rather than appear to exhibit double standards. He explained in private that his aim was to avoid any controversy with those with whom he was fundamentally in disagreement:

> I don't find it profitable, ... even to discuss in conversation most modern writers with most

---

[46] Paul Elmer More, "The Cleft Eliot," *Saturday Review of Literature* 9 (12 Nov. 1932): 236.

[47] "Last Words," *Criterion* XVIII.71 (Jan. 1939): 269-75.

> of the people whom I know. ... I want to bring to the light of day the differences between my views and those of people with whom I have been (superficially) associated like Read and Richards.[48]

Eliot felt that the journal could not contain his increasing concerns with social issues; and because of the "present state of public affairs, he lacked the "enthusiasm necessary to make a literary review what it should be" and pledged that literature would never be to him "a matter of indifference".[49] In "Last Words", Eliot's lack of enthusiasm, caused by "the present state of public affairs - which has induced in myself a depression of spirits",[50] is reminiscent of his justification for writing a work of social criticism in *The Idea of a Christian Society.* In this book he explained that current political events moved his sense of Christian obligation to expend his talents to social and religious, as well as to literary, benefit.

Yet even Margolis admits that he cannot fully define the causes and results of a so-called dramatic change in Eliot's life and work: "intellectual and spiritual conversions such as Eliot's defy simple explanation; with Eliot, we do not yet have even that material."[51] Since Dr. Kojecky's authoritative study of Eliot's social

---

[48] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 8 December 1933, Princeton.

[49] "Last Words" 274.

[50] "Last Words" 274.

[51] Margolis 87.

criticism (1971), and Margolis's detailed work, what *has* come to light is the profound impact on Eliot's intellectual and spiritual life of Church-based organisations such as the Chandos Group and the Moot, as well as high-ranking clergy such as Bishop Bell, and Archbishop Fisher. The co-operation of new friends in Christian intellectual circles counters Margolis's suggestion that Eliot suffered from an intellectual loneliness. Even though he was one of the few creative writers among them, it seems that he was never more involved in processes of co-operation and exchanges of information than with his Anglican colleagues.

As his continued concern for and debate with Ezra Pound demonstrates, Eliot did not easily relinquish his ties with his "pre-conversion" friends. He found that the old "secular" debates were too vigorously partisan for his tastes.[52] It was, after all, for his individual talent that Eliot was requested to take part in Church related activities, from drama to Prayer Book revision. And when he entered into lively debates about the Church's approach to modernism, or the correct wording of a *Summa* of a "new Christendom" in the Moot, he was at least assured that he would not have to take sides in a controversy, and that fellow participants shared his desire for social, political and spiritual reforms.

Although one of the initial objectives of *The Criterion* was to encourage a flourishing cultural exchange between the respective intelligentsia of Britain

---

[52] Margolis 127.

and Europe, Eliot became increasingly aware that the kind of communion that he desired was becoming impossible to implement. He recalls his growing disillusionment with the idea; because of the difficulty of maintaining lines of communication with European contributors; because the "European mind" which he had hoped to engender proved elusive and because, "divisions of political theory became more important; alien minds took alien ways, and Britain and France appeared to be progressing nowhere."[53] But he was proud of the literary ecumenism of *The Criterion* which brought the work of many hitherto unknown European writers to the attention of the British literary milieu.[54] Works by Jean Cocteau, Ramon Fernandez, Charles Maurras and Jacques Maritain, were first published in Britain in *The Criterion*.[55] The "'Crypt of St. Eliot's'" had become the parish of Russell Square.

Eliot had already begun to integrate his concerns for the Church in *The Criterion* and his inner circle of Christian intellectuals appreciated the climate of active cooperation and fellowship which he created during its publication. That atmosphere of communion transcended the journal, and like its earlier success at encouraging connections within a wide European culture, it showed

> a Christian root still living in England which could be tapped and was being tapped and

---

[53] "Last Words" 271.

[54] Patrick McLaughlin, "Dorothy and I," The Dorothy L. Sayers Society Archives, ed. R.L. Clarke (Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex: Dorothy L. Sayers Society, Feb. 1989) 5.

[55] "Last Words" 271.

> beginning even to put its shoots above ground. ... *Some of us who had been Tom's disciples wanted to carry it on* ....[56]

With such encouragement, Revd. McLaughlin went on to found St. Anne's House - tangible evidence of Eliot's influence in the Anglican circle.

It was as much in the name of fellowship as in the cause of duty that Eliot was involved in so many committees that promoted the Anglican faith in society. St. Anne's House, Soho, is the product of one such committee which has become something of an institution. The purpose of the Society is to encourage the lay study of the problems concerning Christianity in modern culture and society.[57] Formed in 1943, and directed by Revd. McLaughlin, St. Anne's Society comprised some familiar names from the Moot, the *Criterion* and the *New English Weekly*: J.H. Oldham, V.A. Demant, Philip Mairet, Maurice Reckitt, and public figures such as authors Dorothy L. Sayers and Charles Williams, the poet John Heath-Stubbs and the novelist Rose Macaulay. St. Anne's House was a worship centre, Christian social club and lecture centre. Eliot was a Vice-President, and assisted McLaughlin privately. Eliot and Mairet gave a lecture there in 1943 "On the Meaning of Culture", which was revised and

---

[56] McLaughlin 5. My emphasis.

[57] Roger Kojecký, personal communication, notes of interview between Roger Kojecky and Patrick McLaughlin, 21 September 1968; also, "St Anne's House, Soho: A Report of the first ten years," (London: Claridge, [1953]); and Tim Miller, current churchwarden of St. Anne's, letter to the author, 9 January 1991.

reprinted in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (first published in serial form in the *New English Weekly*). Perhaps it was because the original committee addressed itself to the practical aspect of the promotion of Christian literature, sociology, music, drama and worship, that of all the societies generated from the Conferences of the decade of the 1930s, it has survived intact and flourished.

The earliest collaboration with those who were to join with Eliot in the Moot started during his editorial reign at *The Criterion*. He anonymously translated a treatise by Jacques Maritain on Poetry and Religion, for example, as early as 1927.[58] In 1934, Eliot allowed Christopher Dawson to address what would be one of the Moot's paramount concerns: the rise of totalitarianism in society and how it would affect religion.[59] In his tribute to former *Times Literary Supplement* editor, Bruce Richmond, Eliot confessed the communal aim of his editorship which was to "to know his contributors personally; to form a [dependable] nucleus of writers"; and he stated that he read "every word" of what he printed.[60] So he and his contributors successfully broadened his range of interest through *The Criterion*'s network. When *The Criterion* closed, many of its

---

[58] T.S.Eliot, trans., "Poetry and Religion by Jacques Maritain," *Criterion*. In two parts: (Jan. 1927): 7; (May 1927): 214-30. The translation is erroneously credited to F.S. Flint.

[59] Christopher Dawson, "Religion and the Totalitarian State," *Criterion* (Oct. 1934): 1-6.

[60] "Bruce Lyttleton Richmond," *Times Literary Supplement* 3072 (13 Jan. 1961): [17].

contributors missed the fellowship and exchange of ideas - some resorted to scribbling ideas to one another on postcards in spare moments.[61] Obviously, a more efficient public forum was needed.

Eliot explained in "Last Words" that there was not enough room in *The Criterion* for what was more than a straightforward "mutation" or even gradual change in his priorities but represented a rapid growth of an area of concern:

> For myself, a right political philosophy came more and more to imply a right theology - and right economics to depend on right ethics; leading to emphases which somewhat stretched the original framework of a literary review. [62]

It is apparent that Eliot began to feel his duties lay elsewhere, although he still maintained that it was also the duty of the modern Christian intellectual to address these concerns, and he began to delegate issues to others. For example, he mentions the current "Liberalist" debate over monetary reforms in "Last Words" as an illustration of the sort of issue that should be addressed in a modern journal, but not, with any propriety at least, in *The Criterion*. He therefore handed the reins to his social activist friend A.R. Orage, whose editorial policy in the *New English Weekly* was "to set these considerations in a wider context of

---

[61] Roger Kojecký, personal communication, notes of interview between Roger Kojecky and Patrick McLaughlin, 21 September 1968.

[62] "Last Words" 272.

social values".[63] Eliot continued as a contributor to the *New English Weekly* sparring freely with his old, atheist friend Ezra Pound, while offering a Christian perspective on the issue of economic reform in a social context. Once absolved of the responsibility of editorial objectivity, Eliot could give a less inhibited vent to his opinions.

First words: the move to Christian journalism

Whereas he had once made use of journals such as *The Criterion* to promote new literary thought and cross-influences between Britain, the Continent and the United States, now he revised his intentions, but not his methods, to the benefit of the Church. He encouraged new thinking within the Church itself, and challenged those who spoke against it. He attempted to promote a Christian unity, which was not dissimilar to the type of literary ecumenism he had encouraged in his work for *The Criterion,* but now he directed his attention to addressing public issues that would affect the Church and its role in society. Indeed, Eliot believed that the milieu in which *The Criterion* flourished was no longer relevant to modern circumstances; it was born of an attempt to make new art and literature survive in an old world, when he would rather strive to found a worthwhile culture for a world which might even give birth to a *Koinonica*, a kingdom yet to come, as his colleagues in the Moot called it:

---

[63] "Last Words" 272-3.

> Only from about the year 1926 did the features of the post-war world begin clearly to emerge - and not only in the sphere of politics. From about that date one began slowly to realize that the intellectual and artistic output of the previous seven years had been rather the last efforts of an old world, than the first struggles of a new. [64].

The Moot introduced a new journal, *The Christian News-Letter*, in 1939, the same year that *The Criterion* was discontinued.[65] Its editor was Oldham, the founder and leading voice of the Moot; Eliot was on the editorial board, and was acting editor for two weeks in 1941. The foundation of *The Christian News-Letter* had a strong literary bent at first; Dorothy L. Sayers is also credited as a founder and contributed to the December 1939 issue. Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* may have encouraged her to write her theological treatise on the creative process, *The Mind of the Maker* (1941).[66] Her subsequent involvement seems minimal, however, and, as she did not take part in the Moot, it would appear that the function of *The Christian News-Letter* changed quite quickly as it soon concentrated almost wholly on issues of immediate concern to the Moot.

The Christian News-Letter was quite clearly the Moot's main public organ. Oldham offered summaries of

---

[64] "Last Words" 271.

[65] Kojecký 174.

[66] Neville Osmond, "A Critique of *The Mind of the Maker*," Dorothy L. Sayers Annual Convention, 27 July 1991.

the Moot debates in his commentaries, publicised the work and opinions of individual members without mentioning the Moot in public . Eliot's work particularly benefitted from the public support of *The Christian News-Letter*. In February 1940, Oldham devoted a Supplement to a review of *The Idea of a Christian Society*. He affirmed his belief in the validity of the impact of Eliot's work on Christian society when he wrote: "No one can in the future discuss the question of a more Christian order of society without taking account of what Mr. Eliot has said."[67] He remarks on Eliot's change in priorities:

> It was not an academic interest that prompted the writing of the book. Mr. Eliot was moved to undertake it by a profound shock to *his moral nature* in September 1939. There was raised in his mind a fundamental doubt about the soundness of our present civilisation. [68]

Eliot's book was approved on the highest ecclesistical level as the Archbishop of York emphasised in a later Supplement to *The Christian News-Letter* the importance of Eliot's exegesis of the phrases the "community of Christians" and the "Christian community". Developing what Eliot had argued, the Archbishop added that it is the duty of the Church to encourage the "community of Christians" to become the "Christian community"; and that the Church itself draws upon organs such as *The Christian*

---

[67] J.H. Oldham, "The Idea of a Christian Society," *The Christian News-Letter* Supplement No. 18 (Feb. 28 1940).

[68] Oldham (28 Feb. 1940). My emphasis.

News-Letter, and its foundation society, the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life, another parent group of the Moot.[69]

Maurice Reckitt, fellow Moot member, also favourably reviewed *The Idea of a Christian Society* in the *New English Weekly*, and confirmed that Eliot's work was strongly influenced by that of the Moot's French consultant, Philip Mairet.[70] This is another good indication of the support and encouragement that Eliot received from his friends in the Moot. It revived, too, long-standing ties from the early days of *The Criterion*, a periodical to which Reckitt, Mairet, and many subsequent Moot members had contributed. It was more than a cosy arrangement of private mutual congratulation, however, for this circle also actively engaged in public debates with each other. Eliot replied to Reckitt's review, for example, and suggested that Reckitt may have misinterpreted *The Idea of a Christian Society*, but if that were possible, then perhaps the book is lacking and the ideas presented in it need more exegesis.[71] He proceeds to do this in his letter to the journal, and so again, his journalism becomes a valuable companion and commentary to his larger published works.

---

[69] William Ebor, Archbishop of York, "Begin Now," *The Christian News-Letter* Supplement No. 41 (Aug. 1940).

[70] Maurice Reckitt, "Views and Reviews: A Sub-Christian Society?", *New English Weekly* XVI.8 (7 Dec. 1939): 115-16.

[71] "A Sub-Pagan Society?", *New English Weekly* XVI.9 (14 Dec. 1939): 125-6.

When Eliot temporarily filled in for Oldham in August 1940, he had a free hand to comment on current affairs in the light of his own reading and views,[72] which ranged from discussions of the national war budget to the encouragement of the support of the Churches and clergy of the occupied Channel Islands. Many of the matters addressed by Eliot were controversial, and some of his views diverged quite dramatically from the popular opinions of the time. In one issue, Eliot addresses the question of the fair treatment of conscientious objectors and domestic internees. He encourages the Churches to promote Christian tolerance and understanding of human rights.[73] Eliot's contribution to the *Catholic Herald* on this topic is documented in Chapter VI. In the same issue of *The Christian News-Letter*, he addresses his concern about the decline in Church attendance. The problem of apathy towards regular worship had been another of the main reasons for Eliot's participation in the production of *The Rock*, six years previously. *The Christian News-Letter* folded in 1949 with a readership of seven or eight thousand, mainly Church members.[74]

Eliot's contribution to the *New English Weekly*, which had a wide readership in London, is another essential component of his Christian journalism.[75] His

---

[72] *Cf.* Eliot's "Apology," *The Christian News-Letter* 97 (3 Sept. 1941).

[73] *The Christian News-Letter* 43 (21 Aug. 1940).

[74] Roger Kojecký, personal communication, 19 November 1990.

[75] See also Kojecky 80 ff.

famous duel by correspondence with Ezra Pound is a particular example and has been well documented.[76] The *New English Weekly* was founded by the Revd. A.R. Orage, and other members of the Chandos and Christendom Groups, many of whom, such as Philip Mairet and W.T. Symons, were also members of the Moot.[77] In his introduction to *The Idea of a Christian Society*, the present Dean of Norwich emphasises that Eliot came to be identified with these new thinkers who reapplied traditional Christian ideals to a modern society.[78] The journal's subtitle "... the New Age: A Review of Public Affairs, Literature and the Arts" suggests the new Christian Order in society which would be discussed by the Moot. As early as 1935, Eliot engaged in a epistolary debate with his friend and colleague, the Anglican theologian Fr. V.A. Demant, in which he challenged Demant's theory that the Church must help to reorder a Christian society by taking part in economic and political issues.[79] The business of the Church, acccording to Eliot, was to offer fundamental moral guidelines, but not to interfere with the day to

---

[76] For detailed studies of Eliot's use of journals to address political and economic issues from a Christian stand-point, see also Kojecky (1971); Maud Ellmann's *The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987); and Christina Stough's article, "The Skirmish of Pound and Eliot in The New English Weekly: A Glimpse at Their Later Literary Relationship," *Journal of Modern Literature* (June 1983) 10.2: 231-46.

[77] Kojecky 79-80.

[78] David L. Edwards, intro. *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939; London: Faber and Faber, 1982) 12-13.

[79] "Church and Society," *New English Weekly* V.23 (21 Mar. 1935): 482.

day administration of governement. Two years later, Eliot was also invited to join in an epistolary debate in the *New English Weekly* with Reckitt and others on the Church's role during the abdication crisis. In the main, Eliot confines his comments to examining the rhetoric of the opinions expressed by critics and members of the Church hierarchy, but he does indicate that the King's duty is to remain loyal to public concerns; the King's personal life is his own affair - a typical attitude of Eliot towards privacy.[80] These arguments are direct precursors of those that took place during Moot discussions and demonstrate Eliot's phlegmatic attention to detail. Many readers of the *New English Weekly* could not have been aware that they were witnessing the origin of public debates on the nature of the *Summa* which would begin in the next few years in the secretive Christian society of the Moot.

Another of Eliot's concerns was the question of who should control such an influential forum - and with whom he would be publicly associated. Orage died in the Autumn of 1934 and Eliot's tribute demonstrates the influence of Orage's literary journalism on Eliot's own working life:

> Many people will remember Orage as the tireless and wholly disinterested evangelist of monetary reform; many will remember him as the best leader-writer in London. ... I always read

---

80 "Mr. Reckitt, Mr. Tomlin and the Crisis," *New English Weekly* X.20 (20 Feb. 1937): 391-3.

> through the first part of the *N.E.W.* before attending to any other work.[81]

Eliot was privy to confidential dealings concerning the purchase of the *New English Weekly* after Orage's death and was usually consulted for advice on practical matters of journalism as well as for theoretical debates on current affairs.[82] He was very much an officer on the Christian-sociological front, and declared as much in the Preface to *The Idea of a Christian Society*, quoting an anonymous contributor to the *New English Weekly* of July 1939 who wrote "'men have lived by spiritual institutions (of some kind) in every society ...'";

> This is an important, and in its context valuable distinction but it should be clear that what I am concerned with here is not spiritual institutions in their separated aspect, but the organisation of values, and a direction of religious thought which must inevitably proceed to a criticism of political and economic systems. (*Idea* 42).

While Eliot participated in this search for the organisation of values and the direction of religious thought himself, his use of journals as a means of conveying these ideas remains paramount in our consideration of his quest. He continued his association with the *New English Weekly* during and after the war; the

---

[81] "Orage: Memories," *New English Weekly* VI.5 (15 Nov. 1934): 100.

[82] Letters to Bonamy Dobrée: 11 November 1934; 15 November 1934, Brotherton.

first drafts of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, written in conjunction with Philip Mairet, were published in the *New English Weekly*.

He also engaged in traditional pamphleteering to comment on Church policy. Two of the best-known pamphlets are *Thoughts After Lambeth* [83] and *Reunion by Destruction.*[84] The latter was written in response to a scheme to unite all Protestant denominations in South India to form one amalgamated Church. Eliot's stance is that of an objective layman but his method is still that of a literary critic. The issues he addressed reveal how the Church - or rather its doctrine - has affected his work. An indication of this effect can be seen in the draft of a pamphlet[85], written sometime after 1945, eventually revised and republished in *Prospect for Christendom*, in which Eliot admits that "the pure observer, in matters of religion, is himself an illusion."[86] Those who adhere to the same religious doctrines similarly cannot understand them, and he who professes disbelief in religion will be subject to a

---

[83] First published in pamphlet form by Faber and Faber in 1931, reprinted in *Selected Essays*, 1917-1932 (1951; London: Faber and Faber, 1986) 363-87.

[84] *Reunion by Destruction: Reflections on a Scheme for Church Union in South India Addressed to the Laity* The Council for the Defence of Church Principles Pamphlet 7 (London: Pax House, 1943).

[85] Item P17 in the Hayward Collection at King's College, Cambridge.

[86] Maurice Reckitt, ed. *Prospect for Christendom: Essays in Catholic Social Reconstruction.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1945). Eliot's contribution was revised again and published as Chapter I of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, 1948.

"variety of disbelief."[87] In a passage marked for deletion, perhaps because it could be as misunderstood as his previous three-fold confession in *For Lancelot Andrewes*, he admits his fallibility:

> The sociological point of view of the present writer is that of an Anglican High Churchman, modified by peculiarities of temperament, about which the opinions of the reader may be as accurate as those of the writer himself.[88]

He undermines much earlier claims of the impersonality of the poet-critic. While he claims he will examine the sense, verbiage and even nonsense which appears in the Lambeth Report of 1930, he exerts his own bias in stating what is sense and nonsense.

One important issue with which he concerns himself in these two pamphlets is the distinction which he makes between communion, or Church unity, and Church union. He approved of Church unity is the understanding and mutual support between various denominations of the Christian faith. Church union is the proposed amalgamation between denominations, of which he roundly disapproved. He insisted that Church reunion, as in the amalgamation of churches in South India, would be a severe blow to the integrity of the doctrine of each denomination.[89] He exhibited a protective manner towards his Church and

---

[87] *Prospect for Christendom* (1945) 15.

[88] Item P17 in the Hayward Collection at King's College, Cambridge.

[89] *Reunion by Destruction* 15-16

upheld the distinctiveness of Anglican doctrine[90], and its inherent consonance with English culture:

> ... to what extremity are divergences of belief and practice permissible? These are questions which the English mind must always ask; and the answer can only be found if with hesitation and difficulty, through the English Church.[91]

Such is the supposedly objective view of an American convert, yet, he is also saying something far more personal. His supposed objectivity is a sign that he - a foreign convert - should so readily trust in the fundamental doctrine of his adopted Church. It attests to that Church's range of adaptability allowing someone of Eliot's background to feel quite literally at home. The subtext of his statement above reveals his own compliance with the established faith of a foreign tradition and culture. There is something very modern, very forward-thinking about the paradox of such a mutual assimilation of traditions.

It is therefore ironic that this foreign convert became a literal Voice of the Church of England when he gave a series of broadcasts in 1932 for the B.B.C..[92] These talks were a unique opportunity for him to make

---

[90] *Thoughts after Lambeth* 31.

[91] *Thoughts after Lambeth* 19.

[92] "Christianity and Communism," *Listener* VII.166 (16 Mar. 1932): 382-3.

"Religion and Science," *Listener* VII.167 (23 Mar. 1932): 428-529.

"Search for Moral Sanction," *Listener* VII.168 (30 Mar. 1932): [445]-6, 480.

public his disapproval of political systems, such as Communism, and the ethics of modern science, and his conviction that the Church should aim towards the redemption of a society in decay. The final talk in this series, "Building Up the Christian World"[93], is a prophetic preface to the Moot's quest for a "Reborn Christendom", but is delivered with the caution and reticence that would characterise *The Idea of a Christian Society*:

> ... the world I have in mind would merely be Christian so far as it was anything. And when I say "the World", I mean the individuals who compose it, and I mean their social life, their economic life, their science, their values in this world. ... Our task ... is not antiquarianism, it is just the permanent task of making the permanent truths live in us in our own belief and particular moment of time.[94]

A much later broadcast, "The Church's Message to the World"[95], was a publicity venture for the 1937 Oxford Conference, and so proves once again that much of his journalism was engendered by fellow members of the Church. Oldham proposed that Eliot should make the broadcast and he complied "simply because one usually

---

[93] "Building up the Christian World," *Listener* VII.169 (6 Apr. 1932): 501.

[94] "Building up the Christian World," (6 Apr.1932): 501.

[95] "The Church's Message to the World," *Listener* XVII.423 (17 Feb. 1937): [293]-6.

does what Oldham asks one to do."[96] Although Eliot's devotion to the duty of his Church is widely known and accepted in theological and literary circles, his loyalty to friends who, like him, were struggling to do "the right deed" is vastly underrated.

---

[96] Roger Kojecký, personal communication, letter to George Every, 15 January 1937.

CHAPTER VI

"NOT A SOCIETY OF SAINTS": ELIOT AND THE MOOT

"The ruthless foe pressed forward, in stubborn rank on rank".[1]

Early in 1939, J.H. Oldham declared to his associates that he was "profoundly disturbed by the probable effect of the rearmament policy on the national mind" and the "increasing public denial of Christian values" which "called for a Christian answer".[2] The Second World War was a catalyst for a dramatic revolution in politics, culture and religion, but during the decade of 1930 - 1940, many Christian intellectuals, including V.A. Demant, Christopher Dawson, Karl Mannheim, H.A. Hodges, C.S. Lewis, and Eliot were alarmed by what they perceived as the degradation of European society at large. In 1938, contemplating spending a year making fundamental changes to *The Family Reunion*, Eliot was despondent:

> That does not matter in theory, but political events make one feel that one is working against time, and may lose the race anyway.[3]

---

[1] "Growltiger's Last Stand," *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, illus. Edward Gorey (1939; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982) 11.

[2] Moot Minutes, 3-9 January 1939, Brotherton.

[3] Extract from a letter to E. Martin Browne, 1938, Hayward Collection, King's College, Cambridge. Ref D4.

While the work and opinion of modern European churchmen affected Eliot's social criticism, he in turn left a deep impression on contemporary religious thought. By 1939, this common concern resulted in meetings of diverse influential friends and associates from Britain and the Continent who shared academic and religious interests and who corresponded, exchanged papers, and met twice and thrice a year between 1938 and 1947. This group became known as the Moot.[4]

Eliot's involvement with the Moot was last discussed by Roger Kojecky in 1971. The present research has revealed fresh evidence amplifying the significance of the Moot's impact on Eliot's work. The personal file of a Moot member, Revd. O.S. Tomkins, contains minutes of the earliest Moot gatherings, and an undocumented paper by Eliot.[5] This short commentary on two other papers by Mannheim and Hodges is proof of Eliot's active involvement with the Moot (he had not been known to be a forceful or energetic participant in discussions) and confirms that an important exchange of ideas took place between him and this disparate group of Church members and sociologists. Though the entire proceedings and reports of the Moot are marked "private and confidential", Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society*,

---

[4] For a detailed history of the Moot, see Roger Kojecký, *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971) 156-97. A "moot" is an Anglo-Saxon term meaning a meeting or forum.

[5] This file has been lodged in the Eliot Collection at the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds. Papers from the file that are not transcripts of minutes of Moot meetings are all typescripts and will be cited as, "Moot File, Brotherton".

(1939) is the most public and illustrative product of the Moot's duration.[6]

The first section of this chapter demonstrates Eliot's influence on the discussions of the Moot. His ideas continued to develop from his previous literary work and his loyalty to the Christian Church made him a kind of literary diplomat for the Moot. The next section discusses some of the Moot's aims and investigates the effect that some of its debates had on Eliot's later work.

1939: a new turning point

The last issue of *The Criterion* appeared in 1939, and Eliot's own work was at a crossroads. As he remarked to Bonamy Dobrée in a letter of January 14, 1939, the end of the journal was a "mixed blessing," and he regretted that he had not had more time to devote to it. However, it did give him more time to devote to new ventures. One of these was a series of socio-literary lectures on the Idea of a Christian Society which was published that year, and another was his new verse drama, *The Family Reunion*. *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* was also published also in 1939.

Cooperation with those who would become fellow members of the Moot began early in the decade and reached its zenith in 1939. In 1933, Eliot had begun to collaborate on a book edited by Revd. V.A. Demant, *Faith*

---

[6] *The Idea of a Christian Society and Other Writings*, intro. David L. Edwards, Dean of Norwich (1939; London: Faber and Faber, 1982).

that Illuminates, which was published in 1935, and which included Eliot's essay encouraging a religious approach to literary criticism.[7] Eliot emphasised that it is the duty of the Christian critic to "maintain ... certain standards and criteria of criticism over and above those applied by the rest of the world".[8] His deep sense of duty caused him to place his literary talents in the care of the Church, and was the primary reason for him to mould his later criticism to Anglican dogma. It also led him to aim towards a spiritual renaissance. Eliot was the only non-professional theologian in *Revelation*, edited by John Baillie. He wrote the opening chapter, again using the model of literature as a means of encouraging a revealed and active faith.[9] Other contributors to *Revelation* included Karl Barth, whose writings were later frequently discussed by the Moot, and Father d'Arcy, an associate of Eliot who had also contributed to *The Criterion*.

While the expertise and approaches of the members of the Moot varied considerably, all were united by a common goal. They were convinced that society could move towards a Christian renaissance before it was completely corrupted by the forces of evil from without, provided that it moved along the channels of the new science, sociology, and used modern approaches to traditional

---

[7] "Religion and Literature," *Faith that Illuminates*, ed. and intro. V.A. Demant (London: The Centenary Press, 1935) [29]-54.

[8] "Religion and Literature" 51.

[9] "I," *Revelation*, eds. John Baillie and Hugh Martin (London: Faber and Faber, 1937) 1-39.

politics and the arts. Thus, the rising totalitarianism in Russia, Germany and Italy could be avoided, as could the effects of industrialisation and urbanisation. Here is motivation for another "turning" in Eliot's life and work: during a twenty year span his interests in anthropology had transformed in such a way that he became a leading supporter of the new theoretical sociology, which he translated into significant literature.

Introducing *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot acknowledges the influence of other Moot-engendered works, such as Christopher Dawson's *Beyond Politics*, Middleton Murry's *The Price of Leadership*, V. A. Demant's *Religious Prospect*, and Jacques Maritain's *Humanisme Integral* [*True Humanism*].[10] All these authors were members of the Moot who assiduously read and discussed one another's published and unpublished works, particularly Maritain's *Humanisme Integrale.*[11] Eliot's work soon earned a place in a communion of sociological, religious and literary criticism which Oldham called the "growth of the common mind" in his paper *A Reborn Christendom.*[12] Oldham mentions a rush of Church related conferences held at Lambeth, Oxford and Edinburgh in the five years preceding the outbreak of World War Two. These conferences were attended by Eliot, and engendered an "active interchange" of Christian thought. Later, as Dr. Kojecky outlines, this conference-engendered group

---

[10] *Idea* 41-2.

[11] Moot File, Brotherton.

[12] Moot Minutes, August 1939, Brotherton.

developed into a quasi-lay order, in which Eliot could participate fully as a layman.[13]

The Moot portfolio was to investigate the apparent decay of organised religion in all aspects of modern society; whether at home, where declining church attendance and lack of proper religious education were a cause for concern, or abroad, where the totalitarian regimes in Germany, Italy and Russia brought about repression of religious freedom and corruption of the Established churches of those countries. The ultimate aim of the Moot was to launch a spiritual and intellectual crusade. The idea was that modern civilisation could be redeemed by revising all aspects of society. This would include developing an increased awareness of the Established Church of England on the part of those who conducted government affairs, and the improving of education along Christian principles and morals. It would also include the application of religious ethics and standards to literature and its criticism. There was an ongoing debate in the Moot about how far the Church and State should be linked and about which should have priority in particular circumstances. This issue was not satisfactorily resolved by Moot members, though Eliot's views on the relations between Church and State may be inferred from *Murder in the Cathedral* and other writings. If the Moot's aims could not be achieved before the threatened war broke out, then the Moot would study methods by which European society

---

[13] Kojecký 159-60.

could be rebuilt. In April 1939, the fourth Moot dealt with the worsening political situation in Europe, drawing up a list of "Steps to be taken in the Event of War", a creed-like document which may have helped to prompt Eliot's work.[14]

"A new order": the Moot and the Church

The collective opinion of the Moot concerning these crises facing the Church and society tended to depart from popular opinion, and from the policy and propaganda of the British Government. While members such as Mannheim and Hodges may have disagreed vehemently on proposals of action, most members agreed on the general purposes and policy of the Moot as a whole. In general, they believed that loyalty to the universal Church is crucial, and that one's affiliation to a national Church should not detract from this.[15] Eliot, too, applied this principle by encouraging his Church to uphold universal Christian communion. Similarly, Oldham pressed for the Moot to work for a peaceful "international order" to offset the "menace of war" so that Christians could offer the best service to their own country by "bringing to human affairs the enlargement of understanding and widening of sympathies which are born of conscious membership in a universal society".[16]

---

[14] See Appendix 2.

[15] Oldham, *A Reborn Christendom*, 6, Moot File, Brotherton.

[16] Oldham, *A Reborn Christendom*, 6, Moot File, Brotherton.

The Moot's agenda for "war preparation" suggests that it would encourage Church leaders to adopt policies of political opinion on points such as "official disapproval of hatred of enemies", "a generous attitude towards conscientious objectors, and a concern from the outset of the temper of peace."[17] We know that Eliot took these suggestions to heart; at the end of the war, he lent his name to a Christmas campaign by the *Catholic Herald* to "Grant Amnesty to All Political Prisoners".[18] In his appeal, Eliot speaks of the responsibility of Christians to speak out on national policy, in this case, to encourage the liberation of Prisoners of War held in British territories; and to set an example to other countries, warning against the "exploitation of stirred-up passions" for "political motives".[19] Eliot's name appears with those of J. Middleton Murry and Christopher Dawson, two other Moot members, and with that of Bishop Bell.

In 1939, another crucial debate centered on the measure of the Moot's loyalty to, and relationship with, the Church of England. Although the Moot's genesis was as the Council on the Christian Faith and Common Life, which in turn was a product of the 1937 Oxford Conference, many participants were members of the Church of England. Most of them, like Eliot, had strong

---

[17] Moot Minutes, 14-17 April 1939, Brotherton.

[18] T.S. Eliot, *et al*, letters, "Grant Amnesty to all Political Prisoners," *Catholic Herald*, 20 Dec. 1946: [1], 8.

[19] "Grant Amnesty to all Political Prisoners," 20 Dec. 1946: [1], 8.

ecumenical leanings and were concerned with the stances of the Established churches of Europe - and of Britain especially - on national policy. Because of this, the basic affiliations of the Moot came into question. They discussed the idea of calling themselves an "order". This was not, as Oldham had qualified, "intended to suggest a society with a registered membership or the taking of vows", but simply meant to express a commitment undertaken by Christian laymen dedicated to the service of society.[20] Baillie spoke of a Christian "diaspora" which was not to be "grouped and united in the body of a homogeneous civilization, but spread over the whole surface of the globe", to form centres of Christian life "among the nations".[21] On the other hand, Eliot was convinced that, from a cultural, artistic and spiritual point of view, there had to be a strong paternal and national religion which would be in close communion with other Churches, but not dependent on any other authority. As the following Chapter of this thesis makes clear, during this discussion he may have been forming ideas about another sort of order - such as the one which once flourished at Little Gidding.

To confirm the objectives and commitments of this Order, which would include far more people than those who already constituted the Moot, members agreed to draw up a document of aims and principles to which members of the

---

[20] Oldham, *A Reborn Christendom*, 17, Moot File, Brotherton.

[21] John Baillie, "On Maritain's *True Humanism*," 10, Moot File, Brotherton.

Order would be signatories. Eliot was very much concerned about the form, content and proposed audience of the document. In the minutes of the January 1939 Moot, he is recorded as wanting the *Summa*, as it would be known, to meet with the approval of the Council on the Christian Faith and the Common Life, yet to be innovative enough to satisfy the criteria of the Moot.[22] He was backed by Walter Moberly, who also preferred to have the official blessing of the Church for all the work of the Moot. Eliot raised two more points about such a document; the first concerned the credit for authorship should the document be published, and the second point asked at whom should it be aimed. He suggested that it be published by "An Anonymous Group of Laymen" as it might not be appropriate for the Church-sanctioned Council to lend its name to it. Also, it should avoid reference to any current debate on "conflicting Church groups". Eliot seemed to have wanted to mask his involvement with anything that might appear critical of the Church. Perhaps he was protective of his increasing public status in the worlds of religion and literature.

As to the proposed audience, Eliot felt that the Moot's *Summa* was too theoretical to appeal to the general public, who might look for more practical solutions. It should contain more practical applications. As an experienced publisher, he suggested that the format and distribution of the document should be considered.[23]

---

[22] Moot Minutes, 6-9 January 1939, Brotherton.

[23] Moot Minutes, 6-9 January 1939, Brotherton.

Adolf Löwe anticipated Eliot's line of caution, saying that while the general public might agree with the principles, it would not understand the full consequences that appropriate action might bring. Löwe and Moberly agreed that the document could not pretend to mean all things to all men and any call to political action might be taken up and misused - therefore it should be limited to an élite of 200-300 people who were in touch with the Council and Moot movements.

Aside from the possibility that the Moot may have been no more than an ineffectual and transient product of a wartime phenomenon described by Humphrey Carpenter, in another context, as "an academic religious revival", [24] there remain three objective questions about the Moot. The first is: How did it hope to disseminate its theories and proposed courses of action? The second follows on: If the members had decided to confine their activities to themselves first, then to a few carefully chosen friends, associates, and Churchmen,[25] when would the "call to action" reach the general public? In the meantime, was the Moot's discretion - while professing a need for the improvement of society to include social justice and the entitlement of all men to share in the benefits - a practical means of avoiding scare-mongering in the Church and the Press, or was it simply èlitist in its approach?

---

[24] Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and their Friends* (1978; London: Unwin, 1981) 225.

[25] For example, C.S. Lewis was not a member of the Moot, but papers were circulated to him, as were his comments to the Moot.

The Moot considered various methods of disseminating ideas and of restructuring society. During the *Summa* debate, Moberly suggested that "the mistake of the Catholic Church had been the attempt to construct a code applicable at all times and in all places" and that "working principles" should be strictly arranged, so that other Christians would have to decide whether to agree or not.[26] In papers circulated to the Moot in August 1939, Oldham includes a letter from Christopher Dawson which warns of the social chaos war would bring through the "misuse of new scientific techniques", causing the spiritual nature of man to suffer because of "new psychological techniques of mass suggestion and propaganda ... by organised powers, such as the totalitarian parties".[27]

From the little we know about details of the Moot debates, it appears that without the benefit of seeing the full horror of the results of misuse of new psychological techniques, some naive members were looking into the question of the "proper" and "responsible" use for similar techniques, to aid their cause of the restoration of a Christian society. Oldham spoke of "implanting in the mind of the nation the idea of a new Christendom.[28] Earlier, he referred to the draft of the proposed *Summa* as "the possibility of a Christian analogy

---

[26] Moot Minutes, 6-9 January 1939, Brotherton.

[27] J.H. Oldham, letter to Moot, Council of the Christian Faith and Common Life, 23 August 1939, Moot File, Brotherton.

[28] Oldham, *A Reborn Christendom*, 24, Moot File, Brotherton.

with *Mein Kampf* - namely a document which would be the basis of action for a group of people in British society".[29] He simply wished to formulate a "body of ideas" that would have the same ideological and practical impact as *Mein Kampf*, only on Christian guide-lines. This is contrary to Eliot's study and suspicion of propaganda as revealed in the Knights' speeches in *Murder in the Cathedral*. J.H. Farmer, another theologian in the Moot, is quoted as remarking on the apparent success of the aims of the Nazi party which included attention to all aspects of everyday life, its pseudo-spiritual appeal, and its use of universal education.[30] Also, in *A Reborn Christendom*, Oldham enthuses: "the Christian cause must have its *storm-troops* - its adventurers of the spirit, pioneers and martyrs".[31] Oldham is only echoing the debates of the Moot about how the ideals of loyalty, dedication and sacrifice, which were a strong feature of the rise and success of National Socialism, were to be encouraged in this new Christian order. However, Oldham's choice of vocabulary is unfortunate. Roger Kojecky has suggested that such imagery was common in everyday speech during the war,[32] but surely the dangers of this vocabulary should have been apparent to members

---

[29] Oldham, Moot Minutes, 6-9 January 1939, Brotherton; see also Kojecky 169.

[30] Kojecký 163.

[31] Oldham, *A Reborn Christendom*, 19, Moot File, Brotherton. Italics mine.

[32] Roger Kojecký, personal communication, 19 November 1990.

of the Moot who claimed to resist the aims of totalitarian regimes.

In *Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot discusses the uncertain role of Christianity in modern British society. The tendency of Britons to assume that they lived in a "Christian Society" only because, unlike in Germany and Russia, no one was penalised for professing Christian faith, was an "abuse of terms"(44). Yet he speaks of a common delusion that British society, because it is not totalitarian, is necessarily superior:

> For we should have to admit, ... that the foreigners do better. I suspect that in our loathing of totalitarianism, there is infused a good deal of admiration for its efficiency. (*Idea* 44).

And in a private paper circulated to the Moot, Eliot adds:

> I question whether it is "fascism" that leads to world war, or rather the economic system which fascism has failed to reform. [One needs] also to distinguish between "fascism" in the abstract and the partly retrogressive mentalities of certain fascists.[33]

On the basis of this evidence, we can accuse some members of the Moot of planning an invidious infiltration of the minds of the general public for the good of the "cause" - saints using the Devil's methods against him. Many were fascinated by the hypnotic power of a leader

---

[33] "Comments on Papers by Mannheim and Hodges," Moot File, Brotherton.

like Hitler, who had somehow seduced a nation and changed the nature of its society. They wondered what would be needed to draw people's attention towards their efforts to revitalise society through the Church.

Löwe and Mannheim, who formed the Moot's Jewish minority, recoiled in horror at the mention of *Mein Kampf*:

> Comparison with *Mein Kampf* was dangerous and unfavourable because that diabolical book had the same formal structure as the Holy books - it was a report and example; it was autobiography and concrete appeal. [34]

Löwe insisted that different methods must be used in a particular appeal to the general public, because the ideas which would be presented in the Moot's *Summa* were not suitable for a public audience of any nationality - let alone the British, because of what he saw as the apathy of the "public" in "abstract speculation".

Eliot's answer in *The Idea of a Christian Society* is that this "abstract speculation" must be allowed to flourish, and must be encouraged - at least by the arts - under any style of government. He wondered whether arts prosper best when society is healthy or when it is in decay and concluded that present-day authoritarian governments are not exactly benefactors of the arts. "A strong and even tyrannous government may do no harm," he mused,

---

[34] Moot Minutes, 6-9 January 1939, Brotherton.

> so long as the sphere of its control is strictly limited; so long as it limits itself to restricting the liberties, without attempting to influence the minds, of its subjects; but a régime of unlimited demagogy appears to be stultifying (*Idea* 65).

This view is not unlike his paraphrase, in 1927, of Machiavelli's views on the State and personal liberty. Peace and prosperity and the happiness of the governed "...is the first priority of a governor", but the happiness of the governed depends chiefly upon,

> and in turn supports, the *virtue* of the citizens. Civic virtue cannot exist without a measure of liberty, and he is constantly concerned with what relative liberty is obtainable.[35]

Because Eliot's emphasis on personal liberty spans at least a decade, we can assume then that his response to the Moot debate might be twofold: while he wished that the "virtue of the governed" be encouraged through a resurgence and restoration of the Christian Church as a major force in the government of society, he was equally insistent that an individual's liberty may not be encroached upon in any way. The individual, as he learned personally through his own conversion, might be shown the path of righteousness but must then be able to decide for himself.

---

[35] "Niccolo Machiavelli," *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928; London: Faber and Faber, 1970) 39-52. Also [Unsigned] "Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)," *Times Literary Supplement* 1324 (16 June 1927): [413]-14.

The next question arising from the observance of the Moot debate is this: did the Moot as a whole set itself up as an élite but benign society without popular selection and government approval? Mannheim, for example, suggested that if modern techniques of psychology are to be used at all, they should only be used by those who would use them responsibly:

> We may look to élite groups in our society, e.g. the Moot, or enlightened Civil servants....We want to mobilize the intelligent people of goodwill in this country who are waiting for a lead. At the same time there must be a popular movement to back what the élites are doing.[36]

Eliot responded in his private paper that Mannheim was "too optimistic" about the "'more intelligent' of the ruling classes" but did not actively disagree with his colleague's opinions.[37]

Early in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, he spoke of the other echelons of society which have lost their "gifts", and he blamed "unlimited industrialism" for creating a "mob" of people of all classes who have become "detached from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion" (*Idea* 53). The idea of the Christian society, he said, must be "treated with a great deal more *intellectual* respect" (*Idea* 43; Eliot's emphasis). Both Eliot and the Moot unabashedly assumed that because of

---

[36] Kojecký 175.

[37] "Comments on Papers by Mannheim and Hodges," Moot File, Brotherton.

their self-perceived privileged position in society, and because of their gifts of "experience and knowledge", it was their Christian duty to use these advantages on behalf of those who were less fortunate. It was, they reasoned, their duty as members of an intellectual élite, and also their right.

Maritain, on the other hand, doubted that the Moot should confine its appeal only to the "'more intelligent' of the ruling classes". The sacrifices of such an élite for the cause would make persuasion difficult: "that is why it seems to me even more necessary to get the cooperation of élite workers and peasants and trades unions".[38] By 1945 Eliot, perhaps influenced by Maritain, had moderated his stance:

> If it be admitted that the function of *class* cannot be performed by *élites*, any more than those of *élites* can by performed by classes, then some current notions about education must be re-examined...we should have to investigate the meaning of two popular ideas: that of *equality* and that of *equal opportunity*.[39]

He said to More that the country was being governed by those of the upper middle class for whom "the absence of principle and conviction has become a principle and conviction itself" and asked "Is there anything that they

---

[38] "Copy of a letter to the Moot from M. Jacques Maritain," Moot File, Brotherton, trans. W.R.Jarvis, 1990. The text of the letter suggests that Maritain was visiting the United States at the time.

[39] Untitled, ms. Hayward Collection, ref. P17. Possible draft of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, King's.

would, as single individuals and not as a mob, die for?".[40] While Eliot made disparaging remarks about "mobs", it does not follow necessarily that his élitism was a form of social snobbery. His point was that, without the guidance of an intelligent and ethically-minded élite to educate "the common man", social, political and economic chaos would ensue. Without proper guidance, "the common man" might abandon his individual faculties of discretion and instead might unite with others to form a "mob". Eliot's élitism, then, was based on principles of individual talents of intellect and education, and not on standards of wealth, class, or position.

Kojecky suggests that Eliot might have discriminated about who should be admitted into the confidence of this "Heaviside" layer of society. Apparently, Eliot was concerned about his association with the Moot's schemes for fear that he would lose "'his influence with official Church people'", and he felt that only certain people of public stature (though not necessarily intellectuals) should be admitted to the Moot.[41]

However much Eliot encouraged profundity of thought as an intellectual exercise, he wished to ally himself with those for whom purity of thought was paramount. In the "Community of Christians" of which he speaks, the trusted élite would come from all walks of life and they would enjoy the academic and social advantages of the

---

[40] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 20 June 1934, Princeton.

[41] Kojecký 160.

time (*Idea* 80). But the good of the public must take precedence over the concerns of the individual: "I have tried", he wrote,

> to restrict my ambition of a Christian society to a social minimum: to picture, not a society of saints, but of ordinary men, of men whose Christianity is communal before being individual (*Idea* 79).

By 1939, Eliot's poetry, criticism and drama was seen by his Moot colleagues as an ideal representation of the proper culture of a Christian Society. For Eliot, it was a coming of age of his Anglican identity. The paradisal kingdom that eluded the Hollow Men in 1926, now became a very real possibility. He had found a community with whom the burden of the search for salvation would be shared. The Moot wanted to name its new social and cultural Order "Koinonica", as they called it, or, "The Coming of the Kingdom".

Ironically, it was not the Moot that applied a practical approach to its idealistic "steps to be taken...concerning the temper of peace", but Bishop Bell. Influenced by the writings of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he was conducting a similar, but public and controversial campaign in international relations in Church and State; the discouragement of rearmament, and a practical response to social and economic needs, such as unemployment and housing. Bell was alarmed by what he saw as division in the Church and encouraged a reorganisation of the Church's structure which would allow a new Christian community to grow within modern

society.[42] In the end, Bell's approach would have been far more useful than the Moot's, and more in keeping with Eliot's practical ideals.

"An immediate need of literature"

Discussions of concepts of the union of philosophical, cultural and religious history were of high profile in the deliberations of the Moot. Eliot and Maritain for example, shared the idea, after a criticism of Medieval Society in Maritain's *True Humanism*, that much of the subjugation of the true spirit of religion in literature and culture could be attributed to a rise in humanism in philosophic and religious circles. As Hebert mentions, Irving Babbitt, Eliot (Babbitt's former student), and Paul Elmer More had all been among the vanguard of a new humanism early in the twentieth century. Hebert attributes the collapse of this American Humanist movement to the death of Babbitt and the conversions of Eliot and More.[43]

In *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot announced *his* conviction that "good prose cannot be written by a people without convictions" (*Idea* 52). He was also bound by his duty as a member of the Moot to practise his art for the common good. One issue in "Steps to be taken in the event of war" seems particularly to reflect his concern. It stated that "there would be an immediate

---

[42] Kenneth Pickering, *Drama in the Cathedral: The Canterbury Festival Plays 1928-48* (London: Churchman Publishing, 1985) 87.

[43] Hebert 254-5.

need of literature dealing with the issues raised by the war for Christians, in the form of articles and pamphlets".[44] Oldham and Eliot agreed that such literature should offer a fundamental rallying point for Christians to campaign for a permanent solution to immediate problems:

> Its urgency is the reason for a person like myself attempting to address, on a subject beyond his usual scope, that public which is likely to read what he writes on other subjects (*Idea*, 43).

Earlier, in *Revelation*, Eliot emphasized that the key to the survival of a Christian way of life is to remember that it is a common faith, that is, a common culture, that binds the universal Church together, rather than the emphasis on the sources of division that separate Christians from others.[45] He stressed that his purpose was more than the development of a new fashion of thought; "not merely an idea held, a phrase spoken, but something consistently felt".[46] In this way, he offered expertise that he had developed during his pre-Christian studies to the Church, and as we have seen, his study of ancient ritual made the experience of the Anglican liturgy and doctrine all the more relevant to him.

His fascination with language and semantics in literature had a bearing on his approach towards

---

[44] Moot Minutes, 14-17 April 1939, Brotherton.

[45] *Revelation* (1935) 2.

[46] *Revelation* (1935) 12.

political and sociological discussions, both in the Moot and beyond. This influence appeared in all his work that was published during his association with the Moot. "While the practice of poetry need not in itself confer wisdom or accumulate knowledge," argued Eliot in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, "it ought at least to train the mind in one habit of universal value: that of analysing the meanings of words..." (*Idea* 43).

In one Moot debate over the paper of Mannheim that attacked modern political systems, Eliot took his training as a poet to heart. He apparently found himself "hove-down" over Mannheim's ill-considered use of the terms "freedom", "democracy", and "social progress" and he demanded their full explanation, "otherwise we are still moving among words and not among things".[47] Eliot was concerned about the popular conception of the terms, and possible ambiguities of meaning with which he, by association, might be burdened.

Then, from semantics, Eliot turns to semiology and asks whether people will accept the concept of a term such as "democracy" as an intrinsic value in itself, or "is there any value more absolute, in relation to which these values exist?" In other words, while in practical terms Eliot was prepared to "render unto Caesar", ideally he suggested that all aspects of society, whether they might concern language, politics, or any other function, should be subjugated to a higher order, the Christian faith. This was often a difficult balancing act. Eliot

---

[47] Moot Minutes, 14-17 April 1939, Brotherton.

explained that there was "a danger of a sentimental attachment to a term", because some of Mannheim's proposed revolutionary tactics had very undemocratic overtones: "Democracy", Mannheim had said, "did not mean everybody deciding about everything, but that leading positions were open to everyone according to certain principles of selection not identifiable with wealth".[48] Mannheim reassured Eliot that he had intended that the uses of the terms themselves would be investigated by the Moot in the context of his paper. Still, Eliot felt that those persons, like himself, who wanted improvements in society, should begin by changing its attitudes towards terms and clarifying meanings in a contemporary context. Oldham, who was chairing the meeting, must have been unsettled by Eliot's analysis and asked if the term "democracy" could not be dropped from Mannheim's paper altogether. Eliot's sense of duty was too acute to let the matter drop, and he made his views public in *The Idea of a Christian Society.* In a passage that sounds as if it may have come directly from his notes to the Moot debates, Eliot seems to have aimed his remarks at his Moot colleagues:

> Some persons have gone so far as to affirm, as something self evident, that democracy is the only regime compatible with Christianity; on the other hand, the word is not abandoned by sympathizers with the government of Germany.

---

[48] This discussion of the Moot proceedings is drawn directly from O.S. Tomkins's file as cited above, but Dr. Kojecký, *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism* (1970) 170, also discusses this issue.

> If anybody ever attacked democracy, I might discover what the word meant (*Idea* 48).

With a parting shot, he warned that "the term 'democracy'" does not contain enough positive content "to resist being corrupted and transformed into something altogether evil" (*Idea* 82).

He extended those views to all aspects of his work making a conscious effort to mirror his criticism in his verse.[49] Here we can look to the pre-war Quartet for illustration. Eliot warns in "Burnt Norton" that words stand on shaky ground when history attempts to balance so much meaning on them that misunderstandings occur:

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still. (*CPP* 175).

and:

> Shrieking voices
> Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
> Always assail them.
> The Word in the desert
> Is most attacked by voices of temptation...
> (*CPP* 175).

"If you will not have God (and he is a jealous God)", Eliot pronounces in *The Idea of a Christian Society*, "you should pay your respects to Hitler and Stalin" (82). By the end of the year, time and circumstance had proved

---

[49] Letter to Bonamy Dobrée, 9 January 1938, Brotherton.

that Eliot was not far off in his estimation of the possibilities of the corruption of language, politics and faith. His lack of tolerance for corrupt political systems would also be made concrete with his continuing association with Bishop Bell, and other strong-minded members of the Church of England.

The Moot was also very much aware of how Eliot's work related to the ideals of the group and his criticism. In his comments on papers of Mannheim and Hodges, for example, Walter Moberly ponders the question of the possibility of redemption of personal guilt and the destruction it causes by accepting "the burden" of this guilt and then rebuilding one's life in the knowledge of that redemption. Following this somewhat complex nugget of theological profundity, Moberly offers for illustration an abstract of the thematic plot of *The Family Reunion*, which had just opened.

> Can even a man whose evildoing is largely the product of circumstances beyond his control (e.g. heredity and environment) gain deliverance from and mastery over those circumstances by accepting instead of repudiating responsibility for them? That is, by accepting responsibility in the sense of liability can he attain responsibility in the sense of power and become for the first time captain of his soul? (See Eliot again).[50]

---

[50] Walter Moberly, "Short Notes on Mannheim and Hodges' Papers," Moot File, Brotherton.

Similarly, Agatha of *The Family Reunion* says to Harry, the guilt-ridden hero:

> What we have written is not a story of detection
> Of crime and punishment, but of sin and expiation.
> It is possible that you have not known what sin
> You shall expiate, or whose, or why. (*CPP* 333).

Compare also Eliot's reaction to the events in Europe, the German annexation of Austria, and the appeasement policy of Chamberlain concerning Hitler's annexation of the Czech-Sudetenland:

> I believe that there must be many persons who, like myself, were deeply shaken by the events of September 1939, in a way from which one does not recover... The feeling which was new and unexpected was a feeling of humiliation, which seemed to demand an act of personal contrition, of humility, repentance and amendment; what had happened was something in which one was deeply implicated and responsible (*Idea* 82).

Eliot's great sense of Christian duty to society at large is reflected in all aspects of his work, and had a tangible influence on the work of his colleagues. "The doubt of the validity of a civilization" of which Eliot speaks was shared by his colleagues in the Moot, who together made it their mission to create a valid civilization which one could affirm. All that remains of this "crusade" is the range of published and unpublished works which fulfil only one of the Moot's goals: to provide a commentary on the state of contemporary society from a Christian perspective. Where the Moot hoped at

least to revise the education and literary criticism of the generation, its influence on Eliot's work is its only lasting legacy.

CHAPTER VII:

"AN IMMEDIATE NEED OF LITERATURE"

"The modern world suffers from two great disasters: the decay of the study of Latin and Greek and the dissolution of the monasteries", pronounced Eliot in 1933.[1] This is an early instance of his confidently provocative juxtaposition of the academic and the religious, which had an unexpected and important bearing on his later verse including the *Four Quartets* and his later plays. Apparently as a result of his work with the Moot, Eliot diverted his own experiments in the language of ritual and theology away from their traditional ecclesiastical context so that his interpretation of Church doctrine could reach a wider audience in the professional theatre. His interest in the study of liturgical language prompted him to make a last and ill-fated attempt to modify ecclesiastical practice when he joined a commission to revise the liturgical Psalter in 1958. In the end, the verse published after 1939 succeeds in drawing on all of his previous work for the Church: his interest in ritual and liturgical forms; his experience of ecclesiastical drama; and his attempt to convey the faith and doctrine of the Church in terms relevant to modern culture.

---

[1] "The Modern Dilemma," *Christian Register* (Boston) CII.41 (19 Oct. 1933): 675.

The influence of the Moot on Eliot's ideas of the duty of the Christian poet within a Christian society is discussed first in this chapter. Next, the many manifestations of religious communities as they appear in his work are revealed in order to demonstrate his conviction of the importance of centres of learning, contemplation and intellectual fellowship. Then we shall see how his interest in Christian language and education culminated in his work on Psalter revision. The final section discusses how his later verse plays draw upon his experiences as a kind of ecclesiastical poet laureate.

The poet's duty now and in England

Among other things, Eliot's few war poems illustrate his sense of duty as a literary diplomat - especially in the light of the influence of the Moot and other Church groups' views about propaganda. Patriotic duty and selfless public behaviour are, of course, Christian values; but they became corrupted by the military and the government for baser ends. Eliot treated this perversion of public values with irony in his two occasional war poems, "Defence of the Islands" and "A Note on War Poetry". In the first, he follows the tradition and culture of the Anglo-Saxon in Britain. This tradition is shaped by domestic strife, foreign invasions, and campaigns in other lands. Eliot seems to indicate that the urge to fight is a traditional habit rather than a defensive response to attack; men have lived and died through the ages, and recently through "Flanders and France", yet Britain remained, "undefeated in defeat"

(*CCP* 201). The lasting message of the "memorials built of stone" to future generations is not that society has been reformed, but that "we took up our positions" only in "obedience to instructions" (*CPP* 201).

Similarly, in "A Note on War Poetry", he used the extended metaphor of the practice of writing war poetry to address the concept of the consequence of individual sacrifice. Inevitable upheavals in society must be kept in perspective: "Mostly the individual / Experience is too large or too small. ... / War is not life: it is a situation". He stressed that one must make a commitment to the enduring if one is to endure the transient:

> ... But the abstract conception
> Of private experience at its greatest intensity
> Becoming universal, which we call "poetry",
> May be affirmed in verse.
>
> (*CPP* 202).

He is calling for a use of individual talent to express something larger than one's own experience that may be shared with others. Similarly, in the *Four Quartets,* especially in "Little Gidding", descriptions of transient experiences of war are used to contrast the image of the endurance of the cycle of birth and death, decay and renewal. The common metaphor of the "Church militant" is in accordance with the tone of these poems, as the Church traditionally tries to remain steadfast against assaults from the State and from society.

Eliot mirrored this regard of Christian duty and sacrifice in *The Christian News-Letter* when he devoted a section to the state of a society at war and how society

might be redeemed. He quoted Adolf Löwe, who had insisted that if a "new world" with sweeping social improvements was to be brought about, war would be worth fighting. Löwe, like Eliot, adhered to the Moot guidelines "Steps to be Taken in the Event of War", which spoke of a war-time concern for "the temper of the peace".[2] Eliot distinguished between those who were taking action to effect dramatic and beneficial changes to society, and the vast majority of people who had already accepted drastic changes because of the war. Sacrifices for the war effort were making people more "stoical to greater sacrifices" and he goes on to appeal directly to government policy, offering to accept any severe hardships with two conditions:

> The first ... is that no pretext, however unjustified, should be given to us for believing that there are powerful forces in society which would, if faced with the alternative, prefer to lose the war or to patch up a peace rather than accept social changes. ... The other condition is that no genuine grievance be left unrefuted.[3]

Again, he emphasized that for the transient situation of the war to mean anything, it must be translated to a purgatorial means of bringing about enduring social justice and social change. He adds: "it is not hardship that people find intolerable, but feeling that they are

---

[2] See Appendix 2.

[3] "'A Positive Social Faith,'" *The Christian News-Letter* No. 42 (14 Aug. 1940).

being treated unfairly".[4] The fundamental values of man which keeps him civilized must not be suspended for any reason, especially not in a crisis. If anything, values must be improved. In the *Four Quartets*, for example, the government and leaders of an archaic society are not unlike the "old men" in this passage:

> Do not let me hear
> Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,
> ...
> The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
> Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.
> ("East Coker" II, *CPP* 179).

There follows the Dante-esque list of all those who might have held the power to help society, but failed, and instead "They all go into the dark ... / And we all go with them" ("East Coker" III *CPP* 180). He speaks of those who try to work for good - those leaders who speak up for justice for the people and might be successful, "Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us / To purify the dialect of the tribe" ("Little Gidding" II, *CPP* II). Here, of course, the speaker might just as well be talking about the self-imposed duty of a traditional poet in our modern age. He offers hope that one need not abandon one's values while remaining loyal to a society and a country, and the reader is reminded of a second chance - an opportunity for redemption:

> Thus, love of a country
> Begins as an attachment to our own field of action

---

[4] "'A Positive Social Faith'" (14 Aug. 1940).

And comes to find that action of little importance
Though never indifferent. History may be servitude,
History may be freedom.
("Little Gidding" III, *CPP* 195).

The renewed society which Eliot encouraged, and which was defined in part in *The Idea of a Christian Society* in 1939, was to be made manifest by the existing "community of Christians", which retained a national cultural identity and a sense of goodwill between nations. The Archbishop of York sanctioned Eliot's idea of the duties of the "community of Christians". The "community of Christians", said the Archbishop, might form a "great inter-denominational fellowship containing many who, though not yet committed to the Christian faith, were ready to join in seeking the Christian Solution of our problems doing what might be in their power to act on what they find".[5]

Eliot's views on the duty of the poet during times of crisis in society involve Eliot's sense of nationalism which extends to considerations of his sense of community - both national and religious - and to his identification of the national Church with his adopted country. At the time of the writing of *Ash-Wednesday* and shortly after, Eliot was suffering from the sense of a double exile, in which he felt at home in neither America nor England. "My life seems like Alice and the glass table," he wrote in 1933: "there is something I want here (domestic

---

[5] William Ebor, Archbishop of York, "Begin Now," *The Christian News-Letter* Supplement to No. 41 (7 Aug. 1940).

affection) and something I want in England, and I can't have both...."[6] It is apparent that during the Second World War and the writing of the *Four Quartets* he began to associate himself more fully with his adopted country and its national Church, while still enjoying his sense of "otherness".[7] This is reflected in "The Dry Salvages":

> That the past experience revived in the meaning
> Is not the experience of one life only
> But of many generations - not forgetting
> Something that is probably quite ineffable:
>
> ("The Dry Salvages" II, *CPP* 187).

Eventually, he felt more at ease in England, [8] and now that he was cut off from the rest of Europe by the war, he and the Moot maintained connections with the United States through the *Christian News-Letter* and through book exchanges,[9] which continued Eliot's earlier work in the *Criterion*, when he encouraged the exchange of ideas in order promote international cooperation. Eliot's colleagues believed, moreover, that a time of reform may just as well start with their own efforts on home ground and in 1942, when "Little Gidding" was first published, Eliot made an impasssioned appeal for the salvation of his adopted home:

---

[6] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 18 May 1933, Princeton.

[7] Letter to John Hayward, 5 August 1941, King's.

[8] Russell Kirk, *Eliot and his Age* (New York: Random, 1971) 256-7.

[9] See Appendix 2.

There are other places

...

But this is the nearest, in place and time,

Now and in England.

...

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment

Is England and nowhere. Never and always.

("Little Gidding" I *CPP* 192)

His ideal Christian family community at Little Gidding was swept away by the Civil War; nevertheless, Eliot was convinced that a Christian society was practicable. The chapel and the memories of Little Gidding which remain are foundations for rebuilding:

... A people without history

Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern

Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails

On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel

History is now and England.

("Little Gidding" V *CPP* 197).

The Moot's political criticism suggested that there would be reform at the highest and the most fundamental levels of government. Such criticism is surely relevant to the followng lines in the final Quartet:

We cannot revive old factions

We cannot restore old policies

Or follow an antique drum.

("Little Gidding" III *CPP* 196).

Compare Oldham's anticipation of "Little Gidding":

... to protect themselves against the

uncertainties of the future, men build

> political systems and civilisations which they hope will be as enduring as the hills. ... Today all the old securities are being destroyed or loosened by shattering events. Those who cling to them for safety will discover that their hopes have been misplaced.[10]

"Taking Steps": the Moot and poetry

All that survives of the Moot's discussion of the worsening political situation and possible courses of action to be taken are on-going editorials of Oldham in the *Christian News-Letter* and the list of "Steps to be Taken in the Event of War".[11] Point 6 is the most important of the Moot directives from Eliot's point of view, because it becomes apparent that he recognised "the need of literature dealing with issues raised by the war". Christopher Dawson said,

> If war comes I fear the western powers will be swept into the maelstrom, and it will be terribly hard to keep our minds free from this epidemic of passion and the destructive will to power.[12]

The horrors of the time marked a "still turning point", which, if handled properly by the political and social

---

[10] J.H. Oldham, "The Future," *The Christian News-Letter* No. 67 (5 Feb. 1941).

[11] See Appendix 2.

[12] Christopher Dawson, letter to the Moot, 1939, Moot File, Brotherton. This passage was marked for emphasis by the owner of this file, O.S. Tomkins.

élite of Christian society, could bring about positive change, "not when war is over," said Eliot in the *Christian News-Letter*, "but *now*". The very salvation of society - the "Coming of the Kingdom" as described during the Moot's most idealistic moments - is most eloquently expressed in "Little Gidding" in the apocalyptic paradox of the possibility of salvation in the midst of destruction. He determined that to achieve that end, he would best use his talent of verse and prose.

In "East Coker", in a passage that might have been translated from *Murder in the Cathedral*, he echoed the Old Testament Book of Ecclesiastes, not simply as an invocation, but an interpretation of practical application of the scripture in modern times. In 1940, houses are being destroyed by war, but it is not a final apocalyptic judgement; it is a challenge to rebuild - to react immediately to current events in a Christian context:

> Houses live and die: there is a time for building
> And a time for living and for generation
> And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane
> And to shake the wainscot where the field mouse
> trots
> And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent
> motto.
>
> ("East Coker" I *CPP* 177).

"Dung and death" and destruction are just as much a vital part of the "turning point" as are birth and beginnings and rebuilding. In the last line of the first section of "East Coker", Eliot had modified a quotation from the Old

and New Testament, "In the beginning" in the first draft of the poem, to "In my beginning", which is personal, yet still archetypal.[13] The poet's ancestors lived and died at East Coker ("I am here"), moved to America ("or there") so that he, in his generation, may come full circle back to England ("or elsewhere"). ("East Coker" I, *CPP* 178).

Another of the aims of the Moot was to revive a Christian approach to education based on Classical principles. Eliot speaks of a shared pursuit of knowledge which fears its misuse in the wrong hands:

> The wisdom only the knowledge of dead secrets
> Useless in the darkness into which they peered
> Or from which they turned their eyes. There is, it seems to us,
> At best, only a limited value
> In the knowledge derived from experience.
> ("East Coker" *CPP* 179).

The Moot and Eliot's other Christian colleagues provided impetus for some of the ideas presented in the *Four Quartets*, but they also supported the publication and publicising of the poems. "Burnt Norton" was published first in 1936 by Faber and Faber in *Collected Poems* but the remaining Quartets were first published individually as special supplements in the *New English Weekly*, which must have boosted circulation numbers for editor A.R. Orage because they were sold out quite soon

---

[13] Draft of "East Coker," King's.

after they appeared.[14] No evidence remains with the publishers of the *New English Weekly* as to just how Orage came to publish poetry of such importance.[15] Eliot was approached by the editor of literary periodicals such as *Horizon*,[16] but he preferred to continue the mutual support which he had developed with his Christian colleagues. The decision to publish some of his best verse to date in a journal known better for its advocation of Social Credit than literary firsts is an extraordinary act of goodwill . His probable intention was to align his poetry with sociological study and thereby reach an audience who might not otherwise seek out poetry. Eliot's choice of the *New English Weekly* as the place to publish these poems suggests that he intended the Quartets to take on a specific, perhaps even a subtly evangelical, outreach.

As editor of *The Christian News-Letter*, Oldham certainly recognised and emphasized the social and theological relevance of the Quartets as they emerged. Eliot and Oldham seem to have had parallel thoughts when the latter announced the publication of "The Dry Salvages":

---

[14] "East Coker," *New English Weekly* XVI.22 (21 Mar. 1941): [325]-8 (Gallup A36 a, b; C454); "The Dry Salvages," *New English Weekly* XVIII.19 (27 Feb. 1941): [217-20] (Gallup C465); "Little Gidding," *New English Weekly* XXI.26 (15 Oct. 1942): 213-17 (Gallup C481).

[15] Revd. Dr. Gordon Huelin, letter to the author, 5 March 1991, SPCK Archives.

[16] Anne Ridler, letter to the author, 16 July 1991.

> I am no judge of poetry but it seems to me one of the finest thing he has written. Its theme is the meaning of time - a subject which was touched on in a few paragraphs in C.N.-L. No. 67.[17]

Indeed, in those "few paragraphs" Oldham had touched on many of the ideas that are illustrated throughout the *Four Quartets*; one such is the "intersection" of time and the Christian attitude towards it:

> We experience life as a *past*, which is fixed and unalterable, a living *present*, new every moment, in which we act, and a *future* which is undetermined, and consequently full of unknown and unknowable contingencies. ... .[18]

This is similar to Eliot's own concern about the passage of time in his own life and work.

"In a secluded chapel": the decline and rise of monasteries

The idea of a religious community is hinted in "East Coker" in connection with Eliot's own ancestor, Sir Thomas Elyot. Here, in pursuit of religious freedom, the steadfast faith of a family moves with them from seventeenth century England to America until it becomes the Unitarian orthodoxy of Eliot's immediate family and finally, through him, returns to Anglo-Catholic

---

[17] J.H. Oldham, *The Christian News-Letter* No. 70 (26 Feb. 1941).

[18] J.H. Oldham, "The Future," *The Christian News-Letter* No. 67 (5 Feb. 1941). Oldham's emphasis.

orthodoxy. Eliot had rejected his first religious community until he could lay a foundation of faith on his own terms.

The religious community at Little Gidding forms a much stronger motif. Founded in 1626, by Nicholas Ferrar, a former scholar, merchant and politician, it simply comprised his extended family - a unique experiment in familial devotion, social relations, and an austere, but happier alternative to monasticism. Ferrar was a great friend of George Herbert, and the two studied together and founded a centre of Christian scholarship. Even Charles I was a guest at Little Gidding while hiding from Cromwell. Historically, the community flourished in a time of peace "l'entre deux guerres" for twenty years until it was swept away by the Roundheads in the Civil War.[19] Ferrar's community is significant to Eliot as a successful experiment in union between the Church, the family and culture - the ideal Christian community.

In "Little Gidding", he draws parallels between the destruction of religious institutions and Christian values. As the speaker is fire-watching in the 1940 blitz, he considers a type of destruction much worse than the bombing of St. Paul's and the Wren churches which Eliot had fought to preserve twenty years previously: the possible destruction of traditional norms and values. Just as Little Gidding was a bold ecclesiastical venture based on the best of traditional Anglican values, so the

---

[19] "'Our English St. Nicholas': A Pilgrimage to Little Gidding," *Church Times* (23 July 1937): 90; *The Little Gidding Prayer Book* (London: SPCK, 1986) 1-3.

call of the Moot in 1939 for a "New Kingdom" was no less audacious. Now all of that was threatened by war. Even the Moot barely survived, for it disbanded in 1947. Its essence was to react to crises, and unlike Ferrar's community, it made itself redundant in a time of peace.

The idea of a Christian community combined with the quest for scholarship based on Classical principles appealed to Eliot, who had already studied George Herbert at length, giving an address on Herbert to the Friends of Winchester Cathedral in 1938.[20] Herbert and Ferrar, like Eliot, were influenced by the work of Lancelot Andrewes. Eliot had been reading about Ferrar and Herbert since 1932, especially through contributions and reviews in the *Criterion*.[21] An essay on Ferrar and Herbert by T.O. Beechcroft appeared in the October 1932 issue of the *Criterion*, and in 1938 A.L. Maycock's *Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding* was reviewed in the *Criterion*, as was Bernard Blackstone's *Life and Work of a Saint of the Church of England*. These reviews analysed the unique community of Little Gidding, and also Ferrar's literary and theological work, which crystallised for Eliot the cultural and theological well-roundedness of the ideal Christian community. Another possible and previously unrecorded source of Eliot's use of Little Gidding in his

---

[20] "Mr. T.S. Eliot on George Herbert," *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (27 May 1938): 12.

[21] J.D. Margolis, *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-1939* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1972) 150; Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965) 271; Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978) 58-63.

poetry is an article in the *Church Times*, which marked the tercentenary of the death of Ferrar and a commemorative pilgrimage to Little Gidding in 1937. The anonymous author, probably a pilgrim himself, describes the affair in a decidedly rhapsodic yet enticing pastoral manner: "Thereabouts the English countryside is still its unspoilt lovely self, ... all meadows and copses and unself-conscious thatched roofs and little spired churches".[22] Considering the context of the poem, the setting is in marked contrast to the destruction of London which threatened. Romance notwithstanding, Little Gidding's community must have appealed to Eliot's interest in royalism, Anglican liturgy, and Christian poetry and scholarship:

> Passionate in his attachment to the Anglican liturgy, lofty and selfless in his spirituality, Nicholas Ferrar deliberately set himself to reviving the Church of England the life of entire self-devotion. ... It is the heart of all that was loveliest in the rich yet austere Caroline Churchmanship.[23]

There is evidence to suggest that the connection of the religious community and the modern pastoral ideal is of some concern to Eliot, for he felt that rural society was in as much need of fresh impetus from Church sources as metropolitan society. In the *Christian News-Letter* in

---

[22] "'Our English St. Nicholas': A Pilgrimage to Little Gidding" (23 July 1937): 90.

[23] "'Our English St. Nicholas': A Pilgrimage to Little Gidding" (23 July 1937): 90.

1940, he mentioned *The Church in Country Parishes*, a report of a committee founded by the Bishop of Winchester in June 1939. Eliot worried about the poor standard of living, and of family education and training of country vicars, insisting that the churches must remain in the centre of community life in order for both to survive. Then he indicts the report because of an omission: "Nothing is said... about the possible usefulness of religious communities in country districts".[24]

Eliot believed that religious communities, like cathedrals, could be centres on which the community of Christians could rely to maintain standards of Christian daily life and liturgy. Indeed, he relied on regular retreats at Kelham Theological College in Nottinghamshire and at St. Simon's Church in Kentish Town for his own spiritual refreshment, and occasionally gave talks there.[25] Until the war he was practically living a monastic life from 1933 at the vicarage of St. Stephen's, Kensington.[26]

He affirmed that, if nothing else, a Christian retreat is an individual withdrawal to a "still point" in which one can metaphorically die to the outside world, and then emerge renewed and refreshed. In "Little Gidding", he describes the importance of a place which is

---

[24] "The Church in Country Parishes," *The Christian News-Letter* No. 44 (28 Aug. 1940).

[25] Caroline Behr, *T.S. Eliot: A Chronology of his Life and Works* (London: Macmillan, 1983) 38.

[26] Peter Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot* (1984; London: Cardinal, 1988) 211.

purpose-built to allow this personal spiritual renewal to occur:

> You are not here to verify,
> Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
> Or carry report. You are here to kneel
> Where prayer has been valid. ...
> ("Little Gidding" I, *CPP* 192).

An important debate by the Moot before the war was the possibility of a new Order, to which Christians would be committed - without vows. It was not exactly the traditional idea of a religious order, but one which followed the guidelines of the first community at Little Gidding quite closely, and with universal consequences.

Another of the qualities of the community of Little Gidding which might have appealed to Eliot was the practice of gentle austerity without ostentatious asceticism. Religious communities, he decided, were more than important examples to Christians of self-imposed religious asceticism. If run properly, they were shelter for those who had a vocation to carry a greater burden of asceticism on behalf of others. This notion appeared in the address to Unitarian ministers before he returned to what Ackroyd called the "monastic stage of Eliot's life" after separation from his first wife.[27] Eliot called for modern society to return to the simplicity of the doctrine of Christ's teaching:

> For Christian asceticism is a matter of degree;
> and every life, in so far as it is Christian,

---

[27] Ackroyd 212.

> is ascetic: in self-abnegation, self-discipline, and the love of God. Exceptional austerities are for exceptional men; ... The ascetic ideal ... seems to me implied in the Summary of the Law.[28]

In *The Idea of a Christian Society*, he could not conceive of such a Christian society without religious communities, for they give people a "*respect* for the religious life, the life of prayer and contemplation, and for those who attempt to practise it" (*Idea*, 79). Departing from the Moot's élitist approach to the new Order he said he "should not like the 'Community of Christians' ... to be thought of as merely the nicest, most intelligent and public-spirited of the upper middle-class ..." (*Idea* 79-80).

A year later, in an address to the Anglo-Catholic Summer School, a modern Christian community, he suggested that the modern Christian is more spiritually isolated than ever before. In order for communal religion to flourish, one needs settled communities where individuals can take refuge in times of crisis, and here we come full circle to the theme of Eliot's quest for communion with

---

[28] "The Modern Dilemma" (19 Oct. 1933): 676.

Note: The "Summary of the Law" is used in Catholic and Protestant worship and quotes Christ's succinct rendering of the spirit of intent of the Ten Commandments: "Our Lord Jesus Christ said: Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (Book of Common Prayer)

others overcoming the loneliness of spiritual and scholarly isolation:

> It is the exceptional man who can retire to the desert to pray - and the still more exceptional man who can maintain his devotional life in a railway waiting-room full of strangers. So true is it that in the Faith we are members one of another.[29]

Then he emphasised his ideal of a country parish and pastoral life: "Readers of *Christendom* do not need to be reminded that an agricultural community is the most stable".[30] This brings us back to the archetypal agricultural community of "East Coker", infused again with the lyricism of Ecclesiastes:

> Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
> Mirth of those since under the earth.
> Nourishing the corn...
> The time of milking and the time of harvest
> ...
> The time of the coupling of man and woman
> ...
> Feet rising and falling.
> Eating and drinking. Dung and death.
> ("East Coker" I, *CPP* 178).

In *The Idea of a Christian Society*, Eliot stated that he was not attempting to suggest "any idyllic picture of the

---

[29] "Preface to the English Tradition," *Christendom* (Oxford) X.38 (June 1940): 105.

[30] "Preface to the English Tradition," *Christendom* (Oxford) X.38 (June 1940): 105.

rural parish, either present of past" (*Idea* 59). Instead, he presented "the idea of a small and mostly self-contained group attached to the soil and having its interests centered in a particular place", with a "unity" which can be planned, but "also has to grow through generations" (*Idea* 59). Eliot suggested that the future, in Christian terms, may not bring guaranteed paradise, but there is always the hope that one is certain of a second chance. This cycle of ritual celebrating birth, marriage and death is of great interest to Eliot, and it will manifest itself again in his study of the liturgy and doctrine of the Church, which intends to fulfill man's need for ritual.

George Every has confirmed this evidence of Eliot's pastoral and academic interests concerning religious communities. Eliot approved of the "combination of prayer, study and manual labour" which Kelham nurtured, and of "ideas of orthodoxy and heresy applied on a wider field than early church history".[31] Eliot's concerns about the decline in country parishes proved prophetic because his fears were realised, but his hopes for future improvement have not come to fruition:

> Eliot was aware of objections to establishment and disestablishement [of the national Church], but missed, as we did at Kelham, the change in the character of parishes which spread with commuters from the cities into the countryside after the war, and made the clergy and their

---

[31] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

> congregations less inclined to want the crowd who flowed over the London Bridge in *The Waste Land* and became the chorus "living and partly living" in *Murder in the Cathedral*.[32]

If, after the Second World War, Eliot recognised this change, then that is why his presentation of religious communities altered as well. In the later verse plays, he suggests alternative communities; the most notable is the "sanatorium" (*The Cocktail Party*, *CPP* 419) which Celia enters in order to heal her "sense of sin". Wishwood is a kind of community to which Harry must return in *The Family Reunion* in order determine his own path to salvation - at least his aunt is there to hear his confession and to absolve him. The hospital in *The Elder Statesman* is another example: whereas Thomas Becket retreated to his cathedral, Eliot suggests a modern equivalent in the later plays: a "hospital" in its historical sense, because it is removed from the routine of daily life, and harbours "prayer, study and manual labour".

His own intense needs drew him to religious communities as refuges where he could receive spiritual counsel and enjoy a sense of communion with like-minded intellectuals. An awareness of the passage of time, a sense of desperation caused by political and social upheavals, and a need to share what might be a very lonely experience all relate to the special combination of personal experience and the business of the working

---

[32] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

out of poetry which appears so vividly in the *Four Quartets*, and which he expressed to Dobrée:

> I seem to need other people's opinions (or those of a small number of people) more than I once did. ... I feel the need for it especially just now, when I have been conscious of working, ... against time.[33]

There is a definite outward swing in the *Four Quartets* to the spiritual well-being of others - or rather of society in general; a sense of care, concern and need for communion which goes beyond conventional "do-goodery":

> We appreciate this better
> In the agony of others, nearly experienced,
> Involving ourselves, than in our own.
> For our own past is covered by the currents of actions
> But the torment of others remains an experience
> Unqualified, ...
>
> ("The Dry Salvages" *CPP* 187)

This passage unites Eliot's thoughts on the Christian duty of the individual, and the sense of communion which is engendered by religious communities. Having found a sense of security in the communities, he is now confident to offer his experience mediated through the speaker of the poem where it may be of use to others.

---

[33] Bonamy Dobrée, "T.S. Eliot, A Personal Reminiscence," *T.S. Eliot: The Man and his Work*, ed. Allen Tate, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967) 86.

"Moving and Disturbing and Consoling": poetic liturgy

"It's a most moving and disturbing and consoling poem" said John Hayward of the first draft of "Little Gidding".[34] As Eliot's personal and literary confidant, Hayward had helped to shape the *Four Quartets* ("I seem to need the opinions of others"). The *Four Quartets* were recognised by Eliot's friends and associates in the Christian intelligentsia as an example of the fulfillment of the marriage of modern culture - in this case literature, especially poetry - and the doctrine of the Anglican Church.

A sense of ritual, and the presence of elements of liturgical ceremony is manifest in *Four Quartets*, but unlike in *Murder in the Cathedral* and even *Ash-Wednesday*, Eliot now avoids a direct imitation of the Mass and, instead, relies on the rhythm of his verse and on half-suggested metaphysical inferences to convey the drama and the meaning of the liturgy. Indeed, he seems to have deliberately set aside much of his previous dependence on forms of Christian ritual. For example, Helen Gardner offers a detailed study of the sources of the dancing scene in "East Coker", suggesting that this section is redolent of pagan rites, the worship of nature and the seasons - the ritualistic roots of Christianity.[35] Yet, as Robert Crawford points out in his more recent study, primitive ritual does not neccessarily follow a direct

---

[34] John Hayward, letter to T.S. Eliot, 5 March 1941, King's.

[35] Gardner 42.

line to Christianity,[36] and indeed, we are told in the poem that the "dancers are all gone under the hill" (*CPP* 179). Such primitive ceremonies have been set aside, and have been replaced with what Eliot called the "High drama" of the Mass. The very nature of the rural societies which he idealised have been changed, as well, as the stamping "earth feet" have been replaced by the ministrations of under-trained vicars.

A less apparent change in Eliot's liturgical method is his removal of a direct imitation of the Anglo-Catholic liturgy from his final draft of "Little Gidding". Gardner suggests that Eliot at first felt that the poem had little representation of his "personal devotion" and so included an imitation of the prayer known as the "Anima Christi" from *St. Swithun's Prayer Book*:[37]

> Which the moment of death brings to life.
>
> *Soul of Christ, sanctify them,*
>
> *Body of Christ, let their bodies*
>
> *be good earth*
>
> *Water from the side of Christ, wash them*
>
> *Fire from the heart of Christ, incinerate*
>
> *them.*[38]

---

[36] Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T.S. Eliot* (1987; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 216. Primitive ritual in the *Quartets* is studied in detail in this work, 216-19.

[37] Gardner 69.

[38] "Little Gidding," III draft, King's. The italicised section was not published.

Eliot's draft version above is a passionate and even harsh pastiche of the original:

> Soul of Christ, sanctify me.
>
> Body of Christ, save me.
>
> Blood of Christ, inebriate me.
>
> Water from the side of Christ, strengthen me.
>
> O good Jesu, hear me. ...[39]

But Eliot and Hayward agreed that this sort of passage would not correspond with the rest of the poem, and this section of liturgy was excised from final version. We can safely assume that if he had wanted to infuse his "personal devotion" in this section, it is more than apparent in his treatment of religious communities.

The sacrificial theme of the Eucharist is retained, however, in the metaphysical conceit of the "dying nurse" passage (*CPP* 181). "To be restored, our sickness must grow worse" is the poet's warning that, before a change in society can be effected, "our only health is the disease". The cure, as he and his colleagues in the Moot maintained, can only be administered by the Church, the "dying nurse" which must undergo its own renewal in order to secure its place in modern society. The Church must adhere to the responsibilities of its doctrine ("Whose constant care is not to please") and remember the root of mankind's original sin ("our and Adam's curse"), as indeed Eliot himself was wont to do in his studies and in his correspondence with More.[40] The "wounded surgeon"

---

[39] *St. Swithun's Prayer Book* 67.

[40] In a letter to Paul Elmer More, 28 April 1936, Princeton, Eliot gives evidence of his interest,

stanza, the first in "East Coker" IV (*CPP* 181), is a reminder that salvation is possible because of the sacrifice of Christ and that which follows the "dying nurse" passage, and "the whole earth" remains a concern of the Christian who rejects worldly affairs, which can "prevent us" from being healed. A feverish, earthly purgatory must be endured, "quaking in frigid purgatorial fires" with Christ as example and sacrifice ("in spite of that, we call this Friday good"), through the ritual reminders of the Church/dying nurse in the Eucharist of "dripping blood" and "bloody flesh".

Suggestions of sacrifice in the *Four Quartets* were adopted by Eliot's colleagues because they closely matched their own thoughts:

> The triumph of the human spirit over catastrophe can be won only at a high cost. The condition of re-birth is that we should face the whole of our experience without fear, in the confidence that God is the Ruler both of Darkness and of Light. In the active response to catastrophe there will be not only thought and action, but also an activity of waiting.[41]

Speaking in October 1941, when both public morale and military power were at a particularly low ebb, Oldham then quotes a section of "East Coker" to illustrate his point that the real battles to be won are "inner

---

asking if More knows of any good treatise on Original Sin.

[41] J.H. Oldham, "The Outer and Inner World," *The Christian News-Letter* No. 105 (29 Oct. 1941).

struggles", that is, the spiritual rejuvenation of the individual:

> I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you
> Which shall be the darkness of God...
> I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
> For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; there is yet faith
> But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.[42]

In "The Dry Salvages" there is a reminder of Eliot's comment about the Christian community not pretending to be a "society of saints", as a saint is a very rare commodity:

> But to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint -
> in a lifetime's death in love,
> Ardour selflessness and self-surrender.
> ("The Dry Salvages" V *CPP* 189-190)

He suggests that a Christian's duty is mostly without drama or obvious result; work must simply be carried out by ordinary people in the discipline that a group such as the Moot encouraged, "the rest / Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action" ("The Dry Salvages" V *CPP*

---

[42] Quoted by J.H. Oldham, "The Outer and Inner World," *The Christian News-Letter* No. 105 (29 Oct. 1941).

190).

"Modern disasters": the literary diplomat withdraws

Instead of continuing the attempt to suggest new approachs to the Anglican liturgy in his verse, Eliot tried instead to engage his literary talents in the revision of liturgical language which was actually in use in regular worship. As a member of the last educated generation to be routinely trained in the Classics, he offered his training and talent to the use of the Church to address the problem of ecclesiastical language. Often, he conducted these studies as a member of a committee, with all the frustrations and advantages which he had encountered while writing *The Rock*. Sometimes, he made use of his celebrity status to engage in printed debates in the public press, insisting that Biblical revision be conducted in a scholarly, dignified manner.

In 1589, Lancelot Andrewes, whose work Eliot admired greatly,[43] and whose wit and love of language he "inherited", headed a group which produced the King James Bible in the "common" but elegant speech of the time. It is perhaps both as a result of his own interest in Latin and Greek, and because, as a "Christian poet" it was *expected* of him, that Eliot became active in the controversies of Biblical translation.

In the *New English Weekly*, he questioned the purpose of modern Biblical revision. In this instance, while discussing the relative success in terms of translation

---

[43] "Lancelot Andrewes," *SE* 341-53.

of the "New Testament in Basic English", he conceded that the translators had produced a version that is faithful to the original sources, but queried the justification of confining this particular version to a vocabulary of 1000 words. Of the publisher who claimed that it would be more accessible to "foreigners" who speak poor English, he asked whether translation into other languages altogether had been more practical; and if the Bible was to be used as a supposed literary teaching tool, why not then produce Milton or Shakespeare in "basic" English as well? Furthermore, he could not understand why a vocabulary of 1000 words - hardly an Eliotic vocabulary - and "reduced ambiguity of phraseology" should meet in particular "special needs of today" when normally we have a vocabulary of 50,000 words at our disposal; [44] as Eliot's own poetic *oeuvre* amply demonstrates, twentieth-century English language is more complex than ever. This article reveals that he plainly disapproved of such a forced exercise of no apparent justifiable use. His later public debates concerning Biblical criticism seem more for his own amusement than any concerted effort to influence major translations, and he enjoyed discussions with a variety of scholars, including a former Harvard

---

[44] "Views and Reviews: Basic Revelation," *New English Weekly* XIX.10 (26 June 1941): 101-2.

classmate who had become a Unitarian minister, and a Rabbi, whose position had Eliot defended.[45]

The "second great disaster" which he had announced to the Unitarian preachers in 1933 - the decay of the study of Latin and Greek - was a barrier to the study of Biblical and theological texts. The danger to modern society, Eliot claimed, is not simply sexual or even financial corruption, it is from those who have "no sense of sin",

> the virtuous and well-intentioned; ... the pioneers of ethical culture, the World-Leaguers for Sexual Reform, the Utopians, the enthusiastic, the unsophisticated, the self-appointed saints, and the people who will *not* study Latin and Greek.[46]

It is the case, as Margolis says concerning Eliot's politics, that his sense of moral responsibility never prevailed over his sense of responsibility to art. Rather, the two were inextricably linked; an argument that Eliot had developed in his earlier criticism. The practice of moral responsibility, as he had written in

---

[45] Examples of Eliot's public contributions to debates on Biblical translation are: letter, "New English Bible," *Times Literary Supplement* 3807 (28 Apr. 1961): 263; Letter, "New English Bible," *Times Literary Supplement* 3094 (16 June 1961): 373; Letter, "New English Bible," *Times Literary Supplement* 3089 (12 May 1961): 293; Letter, "New English Bible," *Times Literary Supplement* 3091 (26 May 1961): 325; Letter, "New English Bible," *Times* (24 Mar. 1962): 9; "For Divine Reading," *Times* (21 Aug. 1962): 9.

[46] "The Modern Dilemma" (19 Oct. 1933): 676.

1923, "makes the modern world possible for art".[47] Moreover, Eliot believed that a more conscientious approach to the use of art is possible because of modern revisions of traditional methods of myth telling, such as "psychology ... ethnology and *The Golden Bough*", which "have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago".[48] Such artistic ideas might be readily modified to describe his thoughts on liturgical and theological method. Later, he suggested that the actual forms of worship, the texts and liturgy of his faith, were of the very highest order of art. The point of Eliot's emphasis on Classical study was that there should always be a small select group of Churchmen (like great artists) who were fully versed in the complex skills of translation and adaptation who could act on behalf of the rest of the church membership. His greatest model was George Herbert, for, as Eliot says of his hymns, "his style is never liturgical. It is the language of ordinary speech, only of a Classical purity and directness."[49]

As early as 1928, Eliot insists that a so-called "educational élite" who have a genuine belief in the Resurrection is desperately needed by the church - especially in the form of ordained clergy who are well-trained in the Classics. Yet he adds that there is a

---

[47] Margolis 75.

[48] "Ulysses, Order and Myth," rev. of *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, *The Dial* Nov. 1923: 480-3.

[49] "Mr. T.S. Eliot on George Herbert," Address to Friends of Winchester Cathedral, *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* (27 May 1938): 12.

real danger to the Church from those who have been educated entirely in the modern tradition, which, as a result of modernist scepticism, has led them away from the church. In the end, it is the belief that counts, and the term "education" must be redefined to exceed the limitations of the definition in terms of literacy. His idea was that education must be an integral part of a Christian Society,[50] and this was to be one of the chief subjects of discussion in the Moot, and Eliot had been nominated to its "Sub-group on Education".[51] Some of his letters to George Every, an *ex-officio* member of the Moot, reveal how seriously Eliot took his function in such groups which considered educational reform and to what extent he wished that the whole nature of education might be revised:

> ... it is important that such a group should have a nucleus of persons who realise the radical nature of the task to be undertaken. You do not want it to be littered and hampered at the beginning by distinguished official educators whose aims are rather toward patchwork improvement and compromise.[52]

Later, Eliot approved of Every's unconventional choice of colleagues: "... I think that [Adolf Löwe] Loewe might be useful as an irritant to academic educators, simply

---

[50] Letter, "Parliament and the New Prayer Book," *New Adelphi* June 1928: 346

[51] Moot File, Brotherton.

[52] Letter to George Every, 8 September 1938, private collection.

because he is quite as modern as anybody, and he is not a Christian".[53] Every formed a splinter Education Group, outwith the auspices of the Moot, but which might have acted as a public complement to its aims. Eliot was to be member of both Every's, and the Moot's education groups, and managed to find a useful niche:

> ... I already seem conscripted by Oldham into at least two other education groups .... So it may seem that my real function in this problem is to be a kind of liason officer between education groups ... .[54]

Now fully integrated into his own "Christian society", his diplomatic talents promoted communication among some of the most forward thinkers of the Anglican Church at the time.

He suggested that a highly educated élite cannot withdraw itself from the communion of shared faith with fellow Christians. Rather, it is to them that such an intelligentsia owes a duty to use its gifts. Eliot seems to recall his notion in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that the great artist might offer something of his personality in his work, but, in the end, good literature belongs to all who share it. In a Christian context, the artist offers his talents to Church and

---

[53] Letter to George Every, 28 October 1938, private collection.

[54] Letter to George Every, 19 May 1939, private collection.

society through his work, and the congregation shares his expression of faith in an act of communion:[55]

> It is not ... that Herbert reaches the complete impersonality of the hymn. Herbert's poetry is always the expression of a particular human being; so that when we have read all his poems several times we feel we know Herbert ... .[56]

In his later pamphlet on Herbert, he reiterated his approval of Herbert's "more intimate tone of speech ... in addressing his little congregation of rustics".[57] In pastoral images of "Little Gidding" especially, he spoke on behalf of a people trying to escape from war and crises of faith.

Similarly, some Biblical translators believe that the act of revealing the personality of the poet in the language of faith is an essential act of translation; technical knowledge must be linked with, and at times subject to, personal feeling. Eliot's influence is far-reaching, for one theologian who was involved in a recent Psalter revision discussed the difficult aspect of the technical intricacies of such a task, and finally resigned himself to follow Eliot's example:

> The ability to get inside your original demands that you understand it, love it, and to a

---

55 The communal experience of hymn singing and psalm recitation of psalms is also discussed in C.S. Lewis *Reflections on the Psalms* (London: Geoffrey Bless Ltd, 1958) 2 ff.

56 "Mr. T.S. Eliot on George Herbert" (27 May 1938): 12.

57 *George Herbert, Writers and their Work* No. 152, gen. ed. Bonamy Dobrée (London: Longmans, 1962) 17-18.

> degree share the experience it conveys. And to recreate something of that original in your own language requires a measure of inspiration. ... all translations must fall short, as T.S. Eliot wrote of poetry itself
>
> every attempt
> Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
>
> (*Four Quartets*, "East Coker").[58]

Eliot's own experience in Psalter revision sadly resulted in a "different kind of failure", but this translator has inherited Eliot's ambitions of liturgical renewal.

Every suggests that Eliot's real interests lay in liturgical practices rather than Biblical interests,[59] although Eliot perhaps felt it was his duty to at least make himself aware of all changes in ecclesiastical language. It was for the sake of renewal in Anglican liturgy that he agreed to take part in what was to be his last specific commission as a literary layman. In 1958, Eliot joined a committee with C.S. Lewis, and Biblical experts and musicians, whose task was to "remove obscurities and serious errors of translation, yet such as to retain, as far as possible, the general character in style and rhythm of Coverdale's version [of the Liturgical Psalter] and its suitability for

---

[58] David Frost, *Making the Liturgical Psalter*, Grove Liturgical Studies 25 (Bramcott: Grove Books, 1981) 25.

[59] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

congregational use".[60] Because of Eliot's and Lewis's literary prestige, much was expected of this Commission, but this attempt, produced two years before Eliot's death, achieved only what David Frost called a "*succes d'estime*" and never really caught on in a practical way of regular use in worship.[61] Liturgical historian Ronald Jasper praised *The Revised Psalter* for its clarity and correct translation, but cites some critics who claimed that "certain elements of poetry had been removed unnecessarily", and even the *Church Times* gave it an unfavourable review, saying that "at some point in the revision the tinkerers took over".[62] "A major weakness", Frost suggested, "... was that there were too many literary pundits and not enough Hebraists".[63] It seems that although Eliot loved to share ideas with literary and theological colleagues, once again he had difficulty working in a specifically collaborative project. Reports from members of the committee suggest that he and Lewis vehemently disagreed on certain points of scholarship. The discretion of those involved has suppressed any specific examples.[64] Another problem for Eliot was his health at the time. At the last meeting of the

---

[60] R.C.D. Jasper, *The Development of the Anglican Liturgy: 1662-1980* (London: SPCK, 1989) 217, 218.

[61] Frost 3.

[62] Jasper 218.

[63] Frost 15.

[64] Frost 16; Humphrey Carpenter, *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R Tolkien, Charles Williams and their Friends* (1978; London: Unwin, 1981) tells of a reconciliation between Eliot and Lewis, when the two scholars and their wives dined together in 1958.

Commission, Archbishop Coggan reported that he "was so frail he might have collapsed at any moment". [65]

It would not be fair to suggest that the popular failure of the *Revised Psalter* was Eliot's fault. Yet a vital question remains: would he have been satisfied with a *literary* or *poetic* achievement in terms of an ecclesiastical commission, or would he have preferred to have made some impact - been of some *use* - to the Church by achieving a *liturgical* success? At this stage in his life, because of the pleasure that he took from the use of the Anglican worship, perhaps he would have preferred to have been of greater service to the progress of that liturgy.

"I want people to forget that they are listening to a poetic play"

While Eliot was proud to write and speak on behalf of the Church as a confessed devout Anglo-Catholic, there is evidence to show that he vehemently resisted any suggestion that his work should be viewed as specifically Anglo-Catholic literature. He wished to avoid his work being used as a basis for any study of Anglo-Catholicism, and seemed anxious about the charge that he was "meddling" in the business of theology. In a publisher's report entitled "Report on a Book or Thesis on Anglo-Catholicism", Eliot responds to a proposal for a book or a thesis which attempted to discuss contemporary Anglo-Catholicism using his works as primary texts. He departs

---

[65] Caroline Behr, *A Chronology of the Life and Works of T.S. Eliot* (London: Macmillan, 1983) 84.

from his habitual benevolent attitude towards students and is unusually dismissive:

> Mr. Eliot has not make any "authoritative and concise statement of the Anglo-Catholic Position." He has written from an Anglo-Catholic point of view, rather than *about* Anglo-Catholicism. ... The candidate should be warned that if he is to enter this field he will need a much wider equipment of knowledge of theology and church history than is to be found in my writings.
>
> ... The form in which the question is put suggests complete ignorance. ... References to my work (if any) by living theologians would illuminate nothing unless the candidate was prepared to find out what the theologians themselves were driving at.[66]

Even *The Idea of a Christian Society*, he says, "is not concerned with doctrinal differences between Christian denominations". *"Selected Essays* and *Essays Ancient and Modern* may be the only other relevant material", but he is still adamant that he lays no claim to the vocation and practice of theology. His role and vocation, according to George Every, was as a "dedicated layman".[67] Whether Eliot's laymanship was in fact a role *or* a

---

[66] "Report on a Book or Thesis on Anglo-Catholicism," Ref. P34i, Hayward Collection, King's College Library. The paper is undated, but as it mentions his pamphlet, *Reunion by Destruction*, which was published in 1943, it is certainly written after then.

[67] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

vocation is an endless matter of debate, but witnesses say that he was in his element.[68]

Indeed, he saw many advantages to being a literary lay theologian. He was one of a fairly large group of these, many of whom, including Charles Williams and Dorothy L. Sayers, both writers of Canterbury Festival plays, later joined formally to create the St. Anne's Society in Soho. This association does connect him, if only tenuously, with the "Inklings".[69] Of all of these Christian literary figures, Eliot is said to be the most orthodox in his approach to Anglo-Catholic doctrine, and it must not be thought that the works of these writers, including the Canterbury plays, can be assumed to be specifically Anglo-Catholic tracts - certainly not on the dubious grounds of possible association with Eliot. However, they *are* linked, rightly or wrongly, by members of the public who find the label of "Anglican authors" convenient.[70] Nevertheless, records of both the St. Anne's and Dorothy L. Sayers Society show that these writers were familiar with one another's work as it was produced.

In 1939, Eliot wrote a review of *Descent of the Dove* by Charles Williams, a future St. Anne's colleague. He describes the advantages of being a lay theologian which might easily apply to himself:

---

[68] George Every, letter to the author, 19 April 1991.

[69] Carpenter 100.

[70] Kenneth Pickering, *Drama in the Cathedral: The Canterbury Festival Plays, 1928-1948* (Worthing: Churchman Publishing, 1985) 5.

> But he enjoys all the privileges of being a *lay* theologian; he can use his own form, ... and he can speak in the language of contemporary conversation.[71]

Eliot has aligned this very "language of contemporary conversation" with traditional forms in order to permanently alter the nature of modern poetry. His later verse plays are in part at least the product of his own effort to translate Anglican doctrine and ceremony into the "language of contemporary conversation". While the plays are set in the social milieu of the upper middle class, they depict nevertheless contemporary, earth-bound characters who attempt, with modern awkwardness about such matters, to deal with crises of enormous spiritual significance in an Anglican context.

As much as he wanted his audience to forget that they were "listening to a poetic play",[72] it is apparent that he also wanted that audience to forget that they were also witnessing a liturgical structure. His brief venture into liturgical revision is an anomaly in a time when his work was not quite so obviously liturgical in tone. With the later verse plays, he attempted a more subtle approach to the presentation of Anglican doctrine in his verse. He said privately of *The Family Reunion* for example that his intention was to illustrate that there was a degree of compatibility between the Greek and

---

[71] "A Lay Theologian," *New Statesman and Nation* XVIII.459 (9 Dec. 1939): 864, 866.

[72] T.S. Eliot and Iain Hamilton, "Comments on T.S. Eliot's new play *The Cocktail Party*," *London World Review* (New Series) 9 (Nov. 1949): 19-22.

Christian religions[73] and one feature in common is the sense of form and ritual. Eliot manages to infuse the main elements and themes of the Mass into everyday contemporary life. As critics have commented, the later plays deal with Christian values in everyday middle-class life.[74] What has been overlooked is how closely the structures of *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman* resemble the structure of the Mass. As the Eucharist begins with a gathering of the community, so each play opens with a gathering of a community of characters. Then one, or several, confessions of past sins are extracted, which corresponds to the pre-communion confessions of the Mass. A eucharistic sacrifice is made; Harry leaves Wishwood, Celia is martyred, Sir Claude must renouce his ambitions for his son, and Lord Claverton sacrifices the pretenses that he has been living with and, eventually, his life. Then follows an expiation and absolution - both Agatha and Riley are examples of priestly figures who carry this out. Finally, there is a reaffirmation of life, of salvation: "not even death can dismay or amaze me / Fixed in the certainty of Love unchanging" (*The Elder Statesman CPP* 583); so, too, in the Mass: "Depart in peace". This structure, half remembered perhaps by a secular audience, gives a sense of completion, and a hope that the

---

[73] Letter to George Every, 28 March 1939, private collection.

[74] See, for example, Carol H. Smith's detailed study, *T.S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963).

characters will indeed be able to grasp for a second chance with assurance.

Although Eliot was welcomed by both clergy and theologians to comment on theological and doctrinal matters as a well-informed layman; and although, with "features of clerical cut", he was invited to deliver sermons and to speak in Cathedrals, his role would never be that of preacher or theologian. His one last attempt directly to improve Anglican liturgy by his work on *The Revised Psalter* was unsuccessful. Yet he embraced the spirit and intent of the Psalms in his drama and poetry. In this lies the key to his ecclesiastical function: his talents as poet and critic were best suited to capture the imagination of his associates in the Church. Eliot was not expected to be a good Anglican theologian; rather, he was accepted as a Anglican poet of especial talent, and it was because of this that he could be of use to the Church and where he could exert the most influence. His dedication of his talents to his Church exhibits most clearly Eliot's own principled use of poetry and use of criticism.

CONCLUSION

As with the work of the Moot, Eliot's published work is one of the few remnants of his idea that Christian doctrine and literary criticism might be combined to form a new literary orthodoxy. Some might argue with justification that what is significant is the way his work is enriched by a unique cross-disciplinary method which takes into account technical, cultural, and practical aspects of literary works. It must be emphasized that Eliot made no pretensions to expertise in theology. Although he "meddled" with it - fascinated by its works - he never attempted to give himself over completely to theological criticism. In this he differed from some of his literary contemporaries in the Anglican Church, such as C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Dorothy L. Sayers; current opinion suggests that they have met with little success in their attempts to engage in theology directly.

Though many contemporary writers who profess the Anglican faith are encouraged to use their communicative talents on behalf of the Church, it is unfortunate, from an Anglican perspective, that such use of talents seems to have declined. The 1941 Malvern conference, for example, was one of many high-level meetings to which Eliot was invited and where his cultural expertise and diverse and comprehensive reading was of use to the Church. At the 1991 Malvern Conference of the Church of

England, whose purpose was to evaluate the developments in the Church over the last fifty years, no literary figures of high standing attended. Moreover, Eliot's vision of the cross-cultural "mind of Europe" that would act as a bridge for international church unity was ignored in this instance by delegates who are increasingly distracted by the economic issues of the European Community.

However, these topical considerations do not suggest that Eliot was unsuccessful in his aims to combine his faith as an Anglican and his talents as a creative writer and critic. Rather, they demonstrate the unique prestige of the representation of these aims in his own time. His acceptance by, and influence on, the work of leading theological and sociological figures of the early part of this century prove that his talents were worthy of their consideration and considerable use to the Church.

Eliot's horror at the international crises of 1939 caused him to feel a sense of urgency which was the reason for his "attempt to address ... on a subject beyond his usual scope, that public which is likely to read what he writes on other subjects".[1] It is an essential fact that one of Eliot's main functions in the Church of England was his ability to reach audiences with whom the Church had previously lost touch. Even those, like More, who disagreed with Eliot's radical treatment of modern poetic language and form could only be intrigued by his fascination with the orthodoxy of

---

[1] *Idea* 43.

Anglicanism, and perhaps might revise their opinion that the doctrines of Anglo-Catholicism are entirely out-of-date.

Apart from works of dubious merit, such as *After Strange Gods,* and the main body of *The Rock*, which Eliot himself had withdrawn from further publication, he brought aspects of Anglican liturgy and doctrine to a larger audience without apology or undue didacticism in his later poetry and drama. Just as the church of St. Magnus Martyr offered a slim hope in *The Waste Land*, so Eliot came to believe that the Church, bolstered by cultural experts such as himself, who were trained in the Classics and other specialised educational disciplines, might be able to offer a slim hope to a desperate and lost society.

Whether or not this was a forlorn hope, it seems certain that Eliot's literary talents have influenced the creative outlook of the Church. Occasionally, for example, sections of his poetry are set to music in some alternative Anglican forms of worship, or are adapted to be used as prayers. As well as the revision of his lyric "The Builder's Song" from *The Rock* as a hymn in his parish church of St. Stephen's, another recently documented example of such an adaptation was used at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York. The Chorus, "Here is no continuing city," from *Murder in the Cathedral*, was adapted for use as a congregational prayer of confession.[2] Eliot's example has helped to

---

[2] Byron E. Shafer, letter to the author, 22 December 1990. The Chorus was recited on 19 August 1990.

demonstrate how modern ecclesiastical drama can be incorporated within communal acts of worship just as it was in medieval times. Unlike the other Festival Plays at Canterbury, *Murder in the Cathedral* has flourished not only in the professional theatre, but as a popular religious drama.[3] Recently it was performed at Hampstead Parish Church and a member of his parish church of St. Stephen was involved.[4] Finally, *The Christian News-Letter*, of which Eliot was deputy-editor and contributor, produced as a Supplement an extended lyrical version - or rather, theme and variations - on the Lord's Prayer. Such a version was intended by Oldham and the Christian Frontier Council to be used during informal prayer meetings.[5] In a sense, this legacy of ecclesiastical literature is Eliot's own small contribution to a literary orthodoxy.

Once again, his involvement in the tradition and worship of the Church brought to him a sense of fellowship and communion that he had once believed was out of his grasp. As he explained for the last time to Paul Elmer More, just before More's death, like his friend, he wondered what direction his life might have taken had he been raised in a "form of worship, from

---

[3] Kenneth Pickering, *Drama in the Cathedral: The Canterbury Festival Plays, 1928-1948* (Worthing: Churchman Publishing, 1985) 3-5.

[4] St. Stephen's Church bulletin, 18 November 1990.

[5] J.H. Oldham, *et al.*, "Pater Noster," *The Christian News-Letter*, Supplement no. 62 (1 Jan. 1941).

which the office of the imagination and of the aesthetic emotions had not been so ruthlessly evicted".

> But I am inclined to think that I know how to value these things better, just for having (being me) to struggle for so long, and for so many years so blindly and errantly, towards them.

He finished in his own hand: "May one say, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?".[6] It is a profound and painful summary of his first ten years of "turning" as a practising member of the Church of England, but it does seem to express a certain degree of success in his search for a faith with which he came to be comfortable knowing "how to value things better".

---

[6] Letter to Paul Elmer More, 11 January 1937, Princeton.

APPENDIX 1:

The "Builder's Song":*

Ill done and undone,
London so fair.
We will build London
Bright in dark air,
With new bricks and mortar
Beside the Thames bord
Queen of Island and Water,
A House of Our Lord.

A Church for us all and work for us all and God's world for us all even unto this last.

Shall arms hang straight
With fingers unbent
While voices debate
Of money misspent
And the coverless bed
And the fireless grate
And the lamp unfed?
How late shall we wait?

A Church for us all and work for us all and God's world for us all even unto this last.

We have worked and have fought
For this London of ours;
Our lives have been bought
By Our Lord on the Cross;
We are those who pay rent
To the temporal powers;
Of our lives misspent
Our Lord bears the loss.

A Church for us all and work for us all and God's world for us all even unto this last.

With strength that was warmed
In verminous rooms,
With hands that were formed
In resentful wombs,
We will build new towers
And fashion the shrine
In this London of ours
For the Bread and the Wine.

A Church for us all and work for us all and God's world for us all even unto this last.

---

* From The Rock, 19, 28, 64, 86.

APPENDIX 2

Steps to be taken in the event of war.

There was a short discussion on the Sunday night on this point in which the following were the main points:-

(1) In the event of war it would be important for Oldham if possible to remain available for the work of the Moot and such work as the Council might be able to do.

(2) Whatever members of the Moot might do in the event of war they should keep Oldham informed of their movements and let him know to what extent their services might be available to him.

(3) A skeleton meeting of the Moot should be held as soon after the outbreak of war as possible.

(4) Church leaders should be urged to take a definite line in accordance with the fifth report of the Oxford Conference on Church, community & State on at least the following points:-

a) a firm stand against hatred of enemies;
b) a generous attitude towards conscientious objectors;
c) an endeavour to prevent retaliation and the adoption of the more brutal methods of war on the part of Great Britain;
d) a concern from the outset with the temper of the peace.

(5) Members of the Moot should be prepared to give all possible help to such Church leaders who were disposed to take an enlightened line on such points as these.

(6) It was recognised that there would be an immediate need of literature dealing with the issues raised by the war for Christians, in the form of articles and pamphlets.

(7) It was strongly urged that if possible the points noted above on general policy should be urged on the attention of Church leaders before war broke out.

Extracts from "Notes on discussion at fourth meeting of the Moot." 14-17 April 1939. Brotherton.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED

This bibliography contains a list of works that have been cited in the text of the thesis. Limitations of length prevent an exhaustive list of all of the primary and secondary works that have been considered in the course of this research. Two excellent bibliographies, Donald Gallup's *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography* (Faber and Faber, 1969) and Beatrice Ricks' *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography of Secondary Works* (Scarecrow Press, 1980), have been consulted extensively and are cited accordingly.

While only unpublished letters and manuscripts from various collections that are cited in the text are listed here, it should be noted that all of the available material in these collections has been consulted. If a published primary source has more than one edition, the latest is cited, but all editions, including unpublished drafts in some cases, have been taken into account. The entire run of *The Criterion* (1922-1939, in the Faber and Faber reprint of 1967), has been scanned, as have available issues of the relevant years of publication of *New English Weekly*, (1933-1942) and *Church Times* (1930-1941).

The Bibliography is arranged according to Primary and Secondary sources. The Primary Sources have been divided into three sections: unpublished manuscripts and letters; published sources not listed in Gallup's bibliography; and published books and articles by T.S. Eliot which have been arranged chronologically. There are two sections in the Secondary Sources: unpublished and published critical works.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Section I:

Unpublished Manuscripts and Letters of T.S. Eliot.

Letter to E. Martin Browne, Extract. 1938. Ref D4. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

Letters to Bonamy Dobrée. 15 August 1926; 1 October 1926; 21 August 1926; undated, probably 1929; 7 November 1930; 11 July 1934; 11 November 1934; 15 November 1934; 14 December [1936]; 9 January 1938; 18 February 1938; 12 April 1939. Brotherton Collection. Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

Letter to George Every. 15 January 1937. Private collection of Roger Kojecky.

Letters to George Every. 8 September 1938; 28 October 1938; 28 March 1939; 19 May 1939. Private collection of George Every.

Letter to John Hayward. 5 August 1941. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

Letter to C.S. Lewis. 8 March 1943. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

Letters to Paul Elmer More. Shrove Tuesday 1928; 3 August 1929; 2 June 1930; 10 August 1930; 28 October 1930; 18 May 1933; 7 November 1933; 8 December 1933; 20 June 1934; 28 April 1936; 11 January 1937. Princeton Library, New Jersey.

Letters to Ezra Pound. 8 November 1933; 2 April 1936. The James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Letters to William Force Stead. 7 January 1927; undated, probably 7 January - 7 February 1927; 7 February 1927; 29 August 1927; 10 April 1928; 2 December 1930. Stead Boxes, The James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection. The Bienecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Draft of "East Coker" ms. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

Draft of "Little Gidding". ms. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

"German Message" Text of a broadcast in German, announcing the translation of "Journey of the Magi." ms. 23 December 1948. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

"Revised later to be published in *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*". ts. [1947?] Ref. P17. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

"Report on a Thesis on Anglo-Catholicism." ms. Ref. P34i. Undated [probably after 1943]. Hayward Collection. Kings College Library Archives, Cambridge.

"Paper Given at Kelham". ts. 20 January 1934. Private collection of George Every.

All unpublished papers concerning the Moot are held in "O.S. Tomkins' Moot File" at the Brotherton Collection. Brotherton Library, University of Leeds.

Letters and addresses which refer to Eliot that are not cited but have been consulted at the archives of St. Anne's Church, Soho.

Baedeker, Karl. *London and its Environs*. Leipzig, 1908. Eliot's annotated copy. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

Section II:

Published sources not listed in Donald Gallup, *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography* (1969).

"Durkheim." Rev. of *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. A Study in Religious Sociology*, by Emile Durkheim. *The Saturday Westminster Gazette* 19 Aug. 1916: 24. Unsigned, but authorship has been confirmed by Donald Gallup. The article will appear in the next edition of *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography*. See Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T.S. Eliot* (1987; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) 239.

"If I were a Dean." *Chichester Diocesan Gazette* May 1931: 188-91. West Sussex County Council Library Archives. Signed by T.S. Eliot.

Preface (Loose insert). *The Merrie Masque of Our Lady in London Town*. By Charles A. Claye, 1928. Reprint with introduction by Stanley Revell. Oxford: Perpetua Press, 1988. Signed by T.S. Eliot.

The Letters of T.S. Eliot. Vol.I. Ed. Valerie Eliot. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988.

Section III:

Published primary sources

Reference numbers in Gallup's *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), are provided at the end of each item.

Books:

The Sacred Wood. 1920. 1928. New York: Methuen, 1986. A5.

For Lancelot Andrewes. 1928. London: Faber and Faber, 1970. A12.

The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism. 1933. London: Faber and Faber, 1987. A24.

After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1934. A25.

Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats. illus. Edward Gorey. 1939; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982: 11. A34.

The Idea of a Christian Society and Other Writings. intro. David L. Edwards, Dean of Norwich. 1939. London: Faber and Faber, 1982. A35.

Reunion by Destruction. Reflections on a Scheme for Church Union in South India Addressed to the Laity. The Council for the Defence of Church Principles Pamphlet 7. London: Pax House, 1943. A44.

Notes Towards the Definition of Culture. 1948. London: Faber and Faber, 1988. A51.

Selected Essays of T.S. Eliot. 3rd. ed. 1951. London: Faber and Faber, 1986. A21 a,b,c.

T.S. Eliot and George Hoellering. *The Film of Murder in the Cathedral.* London: Faber and Faber, 1952. A29i.

On Poetry and Poets. 1957. London: Faber and Faber, 1986. A69.

George Herbert, Writers and their Work. No. 152 Gen. ed. Bonamy Dobrée. London: Longmans, 1962. 17-18. A73.

Dramas:

The Rock: a Pageant Play produced for the Forty-Five Churches Fund. Sadler's Wells Theatre. London: Faber and Faber, 1934. A26.

Murder in the Cathedral. Performed at the Canterbury Festival (1935). *T.S. Eliot: The Collected Poems and Plays.* 1967. London: Faber and Faber, 1987. 237-82. A29.

The Family Reunion. (1939) *T.S. Eliot: The Collected Poems and Plays.* 1967. London: Faber and Faber, 1987: 283-350. A33.

The Cocktail Party. (1950) *T.S. Eliot: The Collected Poems and Plays.* 1967. London: Faber and Faber, 1987: 351-441. A55.

The Elder Statesman. (1959) *T.S. Eliot: The Collected Poems and Plays.* 1967. London: Faber and Faber, 1987: 520-583. A70.

Articles and Essays:

"William James on Immortality." *New Statesman* IX.231 (8 Sept. 1917): 547. C48b.

"War-paint and Feathers." Rev. of *The Path of the Rainbow: an Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America*, ed. George W. Cronyn. *The Athenaeum* 4668 (17 Oct. 1919): 1036. C94.

"The Preacher as Artist." Rev. of *Donne's Sermons*, ed. Logan Pearsall Smith. *The Athenaeum* 4674 (28 Nov. 1919): 1252-3. C101.

"Dramatis Personae." *Criterion* I.3 (Apr. 1923): 303-6. C138.

"The Beating of a Drum." Rev. of *Studies in the Development of the Fool in the Elizabethan Drama*, by Olive Mary Busby. *Nation and Athenaeum* XXXIV.1 (6 Oct. 1923): 11-12. C146.

"Ulysses, Order and Myth." Rev. of *Ulysses*, by James Joyce. *The Dial* Nov. 1923: 480-3. C147.

"The Ballet." *Criterion* 3.11 (Apr. 1925): 441-3. C164.

Letter. "Parliament and the New Prayer Book." *New Adelphi* I.4 (June 1926): 345-6. C258.

"A Commentary." *Criterion* VI.4 (Oct. 1926): 627-9. C183.

Translation. "Poetry and Religion," by Jacques Maritain. In two parts: Part I. *Criterion* V.1 (Jan. 1927): 7. C193. Part II. *Criterion* V.2 (May 1927): 214-30. Trans. erroneously credited to F.S. Flint. C203a.

[Unsigned]. "Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)." *Times Literary Supplement* 1324 (16 June 1927): [413]-14. C211.

"A Commentary." *Criterion* VI.6 (Dec. 1927): 481-3. C235.

"A Commentary." *Criterion* VII.1 (Jan. 1928):1-4. C241.

"An Emotional Unity." *Dial* (Feb. 1928): 112. C241.

"A Commentary." *Criterion* VII.4 (June 1928) 289-94. C255.

"Christianity and Communism." *Listener* VII.169 (16 Mar. 1932): 382-3. C334.

"Religion and Science: A Phantom Dilemma." *Listener* VII.167 (23 Mar. 1932): 428, 529. C331.

"The Search for Moral Sanction." *Listener* VII.168 (30 Mar. 1932): [445]-6, 480. C332.

"Building up the Christian World." *Listener* VII.169 (6 Apr. 1932): 501-2. C334.

"Catholicism and International Order; Opening Address to the Anglo-Catholic Summer School of Sociology." *Christendom* (Oxford) III.ii (Sept. 1933) [171]-84. C344.

"The Modern Dilemma." *Christian Register* (Boston) CII.41 (19 Oct. 1933): 675-6. C348.

Letter. "The Blackshirts." *Church Times* CXI.3706 (2 Feb. 1934): 116. C352.

Letter. "The Rock." *Spectator* 152.5528 (8 June 1934): 887. C361.

"What Does the Church Stand For?" *Spectator* CLIII.5547 (19 Oct. 1934): 560-1. C370.

"Orage: Memories." *New English Weekly* VI.5 (15 Nov. 1934): 100. C371.

"Religion and Literature." *Faith that Illuminates*. Ed. and intro. V.A. Demant. London: Centenary Press, 1935. [29]-54. B25.

Letter. "The Church and Society." *New English Weekly* V.23 (21 Mar. 1935): 482. C385.

"I." *Revelation*. Eds. John Baillie and Hugh Martin. London: Faber and Faber, 1937. 1-39. B32.

"The Church's Message to the World." *Listener* XVII.423 (17 Feb. 1937): [293]-4, 326. C417.

"Mr. Reckitt, Mr. Tomlin and the Crisis." *New English Weekly,* X.20 (20 Feb. 1937): 391-3. C418.

"Religious Drama: Mediaeval and Modern." *University of Edinburgh Journal* IX.1 (Autumn, 1937): 8-17. C425.

"Mr. T.S. Eliot on George Herbert." *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*. (27 May 1938): 12. C434.

"Last Words." *Criterion* 18.71 (Jan. 1939): 269-75. C441.

"A Lay Theologian." *New Statesman and Nation* (London) XVIII.459 (9 Dec. 1939): 864, 866. C448a.

"A Sub-Pagan Society?" *New English Weekly* XVI.9 (14 Dec. 1939):125-6. C449.

"Preface to the English Tradition." *Christendom* (Oxford) X.38 (June 1940): 101-8. C455.

"A Positive Social Faith" *Christian News-Letter* No. 42 (14 Aug. 1940). C459a.

Christian News-Letter 43 (21 Aug. 1940). C459b.

"The Church in Country Parishes." *Christian News-Letter* No. 44 (28 Aug. 1940). C459c.

"The English Tradition: Address to the School of Sociology." *Christendom* (Oxford) X.40 (Dec. 1940): [226]-37. C461.

"The Dry Salvages." *New English Weekly* XVIII.19 (27 Feb. 1941): [217-20]. C465.

"East Coker." *New English Weekly* XVI.22 (21 Mar.1941): [325]-8. A36 a, b; C454.

"Views and Reviews: Basic Revelation." *New English Weekly* XIX.10 (26 June 1941): 101-2. C470.

"Apology." *Christian News-Letter* No. 97 (3 Sept. 1941). C471

"Little Gidding." *New English Weekly* XXI.26 (15 Oct. 1942): 213-17. C481.

"Prospect for Christendom." *Prospect for Christendom: Essays in Catholic Social Reconstruction*, ed. Maurice Reckitt. London: Faber and Faber, 1945. B48. Revised and republished as Chapter I of *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, 1948. A51.

T.S. Eliot, *et al.* Letters, "Grant Amnesty to all Political Prisoners." *Catholic Herald* 20 Dec. 1946: [1], 8. C521a.

T.S. Eliot and Iain Hamilton. "Comments of T.S. Eliot's new play *The Cocktail Party*." *London World Review* (New Series) 9 (Nov. 1949): 19-22. C545.

"The Value and Use of Cathedrals Today." *Friends of Chichester Cathedral Annual Report.* 1950/1951: 17-27. Worthing Reference Library, West Sussex. C566.

"Fr. Cheetham Retires from Gloucester Road." *Church Times* CXXXIX.4856 (9 Mar. 1956): 12. C603.

Letter. "Bishop Bell." *Times* 14 Oct. 1958. 13. C626a.

"Bruce Lyttleton Richmond." *Times Literary Supplement* 3072 (13 Jan. 1961): [17]. C647.

Letter. "New English Bible." *Times Literary Supplement* 3807 (28 Apr. 1961): 121. C649.

Letter. "New English Bible." *Times Literary Supplement* 3089 (12 May 1961): 293. C650.

Letter. "New English Bible." *Times Literary Supplement* 3091 (26 May 1961): 325. C651.

Letter. "New English Bible." *Times Literary Supplement* 3094 (16 June 1961): 373. C652.

"T.S. Eliot...An Interview." *Grantite Review* XXIV.3 (Election 1962): 16-20. C662.

Letter. "New English Bible." *Times* 24 Mar. 1962: 9. C657.

Letter. "For Divine Reading." *Times* 21 Aug. 1962: 9. C660.

"A Conversation with T.S. Eliot by Leslie Paul." *Kenyon Review* XXVII.1 (Winter [1964/1965): [11]-21. C677a.

SECONDARY SOURCES :

Section I:
Unpublished manuscripts and letters.

Benstock, Bernard. Letter to the author. 9 January 1990.

Birney, Earle. Letter to James Wreford Watson. 4 March 1942. Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Toronto.

Every, George. Letter to the author. 19 April 1991.

---. Letter to the author. May 1991.

Gallup, Donald. Letter to the author. 21 May 1990.

Gooch, Brad D. "A Homiletic Strain: T.S. Eliot's Use of Lancelot Andrewes." *DAI* 47.7 (Jan. 1987): 2594A-5A. U of Columbia.

Gordon, Lyndall. Inaugural Lecture. Conference marking the Centenary of the birth of T.S. Eliot. University of Western Ontario, Sept. 26 1988.

Gunter, J. Bradley. "T.S. Eliot and Anglicanism: The Man of Letters as Religious and Social Critic." *DAI* 30 (1970): 4450A. U of Virginia.

Hayward, John. Letter to T.S. Eliot. 5 March 1941. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

Irvine, Revd. Prebendary Gerard. Letter to the author. 21 July 1991.

Kojecký, Roger. Notes of interview between Roger Kojecký and the Revd. Patrick McLaughlin. 21 September 1968. Personal communication, 1990.

---. Interview with A.R. Vidler. April 1 1968. Personal communication, 1990.

Lewis, C.S. Letter to T.S. Eliot. 22 February 1943. Hayward Collection. King's College Library Archives, Cambridge.

McLaughlin, Patrick. "Dorothy and I." The Dorothy L. Sayers Society Archives. ed. R.L. Clarke. Hurstpierpoint, West Sussex: Dorothy L. Sayers Society, Feb. 1989.

Miller, Timothy. Letter to the author. 9 January 1991.

Osmond, Neville. "A Critique of *The Mind of the Maker.*" Dorothy L. Sayers Annual Convention. Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Egham, 27 July 1991.

"The Rabbi, the King and I." Narr. Rabbi Lionel Blue. Prod. and dir. Jan and Krystyna Kaplan. *In Search of Holy England.* Programme 5. Sunrise Associates Ltd. Channel 4. London. 11 October 1990.

Ridler, Anne. Letter to the author. 16 July 1991.

Rogers, Daniel John. "Dramatic Use of the Liturgy in the Plays of T.S. Eliot." . Ph.D. Diss. microfilm. U of Wisconsin, 1964.

Shafer, Byron E. Letter to the author. 22 December 1990.

"St. Anne's House, Soho: A Report of the first ten years." London: Claridge, [1953].

St. Stephen's Church bulletin. Kensington, November 1990.

Stanley, John Mack. "Church and World: A Critical Evaluation of the Corpus Christianum Approach in the Thought of John Baillie, V.A. Demant and T.S. Eliot." *DAI* 30 (1969) 04-A: 1628. U of Columbia.

Section II:

Published articles and books.

Ackroyd, Peter. *T.S. Eliot.* 1984. London: Cardinal, 1988.

Baillie, John. Preface *Revelation.* Eds. John Baillie and Hugh Martin. London: Faber and Faber, 1937. ix-xxiv.

Behr, Caroline. *T.S. Eliot: A Chronology of his Life and Works.* London: Macmillan, 1983.

Bolgan, Anne C. *What the Thunder Really Said: A Retrospective Essay on the Making of The Waste Land.* Montreal: McGill, 1973.

Book of Common Prayer. The Church of England. Oxford: Oxford UP, [1923].

"The Book of the Month: The Rock." *Chichester Diocesan Gazette* July 1934.

Brinnin, J.M. *Sextet: T.S. Eliot, Truman Capote and Others.* 1981. New York: Dell, 1982.

Brown, R.D. "Revelation in T.S. Eliot's "Journey of the Magi." *Renascence* 24.3 (1972): 136-40.

Browne, Martin E. *The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969.

Bush, Ronald. *T.S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style.* New York: Oxford UP, 1984.

Carpenter, Humphrey. *The Inklings: C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and their Friends.* 1978. London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1981.

Crawford, Robert. *The Savage and the City in the Work of T.S. Eliot.* 1987. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

Dawson, Christopher. "Religion and the Totalitarian State." *Criterion* XIV.54 (Oct. 1934): 1-6.

de Waal, Victor D.D. Dean of Canterbury. Foreword. *Drama in the Cathedral: The Canterbury Festival Plays 1928-48.* By Kenneth Pickering. London: Churchman Publishing Ltd, 1985.

Demant, V.A. Introduction. *Faith that Illuminates*. Ed. V.A. Demant. London: Centenary Press, 1935. Includes "Religion and Literature" by T.S. Eliot [29]-54.

---. *The Religious Prospect*. London: Frederick Muller, 1939.

Dobrée, Bonamy. "T.S. Eliot: A Personal Reminiscence." *T.S. Eliot: The Man and his Work*. Ed. Allen Tate. 1966. London: Chatto & Windus, 1967. 65-88.

Durrell, Lawrence. "The Other T.S. Eliot." *Atlantic* CCXV.5 (May 1965): 60-4.

Ebor, William. Archbishop of York "Begin Now." *The Christian News-Letter* Supplement No. 41 (Aug. 1940).

Edwards, David L. Dean of Norwich. Introduction. *The Idea of a Christian Society and Other Writings*. By T.S. Eliot. 1939. London: Faber and Faber, 1982.

Eiles, M.A. "The Infirm Glory of the Positive Hour: Re-Conversion in *Ash-Wednesday*." *Yeats Eliot Review* 9.3 (Spring, 1988): 106-18.

Ellmann, Maud. *The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound*. Brighton: Harvester, 1987.

Frost, David. *Making the Liturgical Psalter*. Grove Liturgical Studies 25. Bramcott: Grove Books, 1981.

Frye, Northrop. *The Great Code: the Bible in Literature*. 1981. New York: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1982.

Gardner, Helen. *The Composition of Four Quartets*. London: Faber and Faber, 1978.

---. *The Art of T.S. Eliot*. 1949; London: Faber and Faber, 1985.

Gallup, Donald. *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography*. London: Faber and Faber, 1969.

Gordon, Lyndall. *Eliot's Early Years*. 1977. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.

---. *Eliot's New Life*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.

Harries, B.A. "The Rare Contact: A Correspondence between T.S. Eliot and P.E. More." *Theology* LXXV (Mar. 1972): 136-44.

Harries, Richard. Bishop of Oxford. "A Truly Christian Poet: salute to T.S. Eliot on centenary of his birth." *Church Times* 23 Sept. 1988.

Hawkins, A. Desmond . "The Poet in the Theatre." *Criterion* XIV.54 (Oct. 1934): 29-40.

Hay, Eloise Knapp. *T.S. Eliot's Negative Way.* Harvard: Harvard UP, 1982.

Hebert, A.G. *Liturgy and Society.* London: Faber and Faber, 1934.

Heard, Gerald. Rev. of "T.S. Eliot. *Weekend Review*" (May 1930) *T.S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage.* Ed. Michael Grant. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. 249-51.

Heath-Stubbs, John. "Structure and Source in Eliot's Major Poetry." *Agenda* 23.1-2 (Spring-Summer 1985): 22-35.

Howarth, Herbert. *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot.* London: Chatto, 1965.

Jasper, R.C.D. *George Bell: Bishop of Chichester.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1967.

---. *The Development of the Anglican Liturgy: 1662-1980.* London: SPCK, 1989.

Kearns, Cleo McNelly. *T.S. Eliot and Indic Traditions.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.

Kirk, Russell. *Eliot and his Age.* New York: Random, 1971.

Kojecký, Roger. *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism.* London: Faber and Faber, 1971.

Laicus Ignotus ["Unknown Layman"]. "What Does the Church Stand For?" *Spectator* CLIII.4446 (12 Oct. 1934): 516-17.

Levy, William Turner. "The Idea of the Church in T.S. Eliot." *Christian Scholar* 41.4 (Dec. 1958): 587-600.

Lewis, C.S. *Reflections on the Psalms.* London: Geoffrey Bles Ltd, 1958.

The Little Gidding Prayer Book. London: SPCK, 1986.

Lloyd, Roger. *The Church of England: 1900-1965.* London: SCM Press, 1966.

McDiarmid, Lucy. *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot and Auden Between the Wars.* New York: Cambridge UP, 1984.

McKenzie, Orgill. Rev. of *Ash-Wednesday. New Adelphi* (June-Aug. 1930). *T.S. Eliot: the Critical Heritage.* Ed. Michael Grant. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. 251-2.

Manganiello, Dominic. *T.S. Eliot and Dante.* London: Macmillan, 1989.

Margolis, John D. *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development.* London: University of Chicago Press, 1972.

Marx, Groucho. *The Groucho Letters.* 1967. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Rev. of "The Mass and the Redemption." By M.C. D'Arcy. *Criterion* VIII.30 (Sept. 1928): 170.

Mayer, John. *T.S. Eliot's Silent Voices.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.

Moody, A.D. *Thomas Stearns Eliot, Poet.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979.

Moorman, John R.H. *A History of the Church of England.* 1953. London: Adam and Charles Black, 1954.

More, Paul Elmer. "The Cleft Eliot." *Saturday Review of Literature* 9.17 (12 Nov. 1932): 233, 235.

Nicolson, Harold. *Diaries and Letters: 1930-1939.* Ed. Nigel Nicolson. 1966. London: Fontana, 1971.

Oldham, J.H. *The Churches Survey their Task*: The Report of the Conference at Oxford, July 1937, on Church, Community and State. 1937. Rpt.as *Foundations of Ecumenical Social Thought.* Ed. Harold L Lunger. Philadelphia: Harper & Row, 1966.

---. "The Idea of a Christian Society." *The Christian News-Letter* Supplement No. 18 (Feb. 28 1940).

---. *The Christian News-Letter* No. 70 (6 Feb. 1941).

---. "The Future." *The Christian News-Letter* No. 67 (5 Feb. 1941).

---. "The Outer and Inner World." *The Christian News-Letter* No. 105 (Oct. 29 1941).

---. *et al.* "Pater Noster." *The Christian News-Letter* Supplement no. 62. (1 Jan. 1941).

Olney, James. Ed. *T.S. Eliot: Essays from the Southern Review.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988.

"'Our English St. Nicholas': A Pilgrimage to Little Gidding." *Church Times* 23 July 1937: 90.

Pickering, Kenneth. *Drama in the Cathedral: The Canterbury Festival Plays 1928-48.* London: Churchman Publishing Ltd, 1985.

Pinkney, Tony. *Women in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot: A Psychoanalytic Approach.* London: Macmillan, 1984.

Read, Herbert. "T.S.E. - A Memoir." *T.S. Eliot: the Man and his Work*. Ed. Allen Tate. London: Chatto and Windus, 1967. 11-37.

Reckitt, Maurice. "Views and Reviews: A Sub-Christian Society?" *New English Weekly* XVI.8 (7 Dec. 1939): 115-16.

---. Ed. *Prospect for Christendom: Essays in Catholic Social Reconstruction*. London: Faber and Faber, 1945.

Ricks, Beatrice. *T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography of Secondary Works*. London: Scarecrow Press, 1980.

Ricks, Christopher. *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988.

Romer, Karen. "T.S. Eliot and the Language of Liturgy." *Renascence* 24.3 (Spring 1972): 119-35

St. Swithun's Prayer Book. 6th. Ed. Catholic Literature Association. [1936].

Sayers, Dorothy L. Introduction. *The Man Born to be King: A play-cycle on the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. By Sayers. 1943. London: Victor Gollancz, 1946.

Scofield, Martin. *T.S. Eliot: The Poems*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988.

Sharp, Sr. Corona. "The Unheard Music: T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* and John of the Cross." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 51.3 (1982): 264-78.

Shaw, Duncan. "The Kirk and the Hitler Regime." *Life and Work: The Record of the Church of Scotland* April 1983: 26-7.

Sidnell, Michael. *Dances of Death: The Group Theatre of London in the Thirties*. London: Macmillan, 1984.

Smith, Carol H. *T.S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963.

Smith, Grover. *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays*. 1956. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1971.

Speaight, Robert. "With Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral*." *T.S. Eliot and his Work*. Ed. Allen Tate. London: Chatto & Windus, 1967: 182-93.

Spender, Stephen. *Eliot*. 1975. London: Fontana Press, 1986.

Stillito, Edward. Rev. of "T.S. Eliot." *Christian Century* lii (2 Oct. 1935): 1249-50. Ed. Michael Grant. *T.S. Eliot: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982. 328-32.

Stough, Christina. "The Skirmish of Pound and Eliot in The New English Weekly: A Glimpse of their Later Literary Relationship." *Journal of Modern Literature*. 10.2 (June 1983): 231-46.

Tate, Allen. "Irony and Humility." *Hound and Horn* (Jan.-Mar. 1931) *T.S. Eliot: the Critical Heritage*. Ed. Michael Grant. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. 272-79.

Tydeman, William. *Murder in the Cathedral and The Cocktail Party: Text and Performance*. London: Macmillan, 1988.

Verschoyle, Derek. Rev. of "The Rock." *Spectator* 152.5527 (1 June 1934): 857.

---. Letter. "The Rock." *Spectator* 152.5528 (8 June 1934): 887.

Virsis, Rasma. "The Christian Concept in Murder in the Cathedral." *Modern Drama* 14.4 (Feb. 1972): 405-7.

Walton, Eda Lou. "T.S. Eliot Turns to Religious Verse." New York Times Book Review (20 July 1930). *T.S. Eliot: the Critical Heritage*. Ed. Michael Grant. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. 253-5.

Wilson, Edmund. "T.S. Eliot and the Church of England." *New Republic* 58.751 (24 Apr. 1929): 283-4.

Yeats, W.B. "Our Need for Religious Sincerity." *Criterion* IV.2 (Apr. 1926): 308.

All quotations from the Bible are taken from the King James Authorised Version.